

NPS, Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability Team Up for Department of the Navy's Latest Climate Tabletop Exercise



Kevin Mulligan of Google Public Sector briefs the findings from one of the teams participating in the Department of the Navy Climate Tabletop Exercise II at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS). The exercise, held in partnership with the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability, brought together Mulligan and other participants from the Department of Defense, federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector to identify problems and potential solutions in support of the Navy's climate strategy.

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MONTEREY, Calif. – The Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) hosted the second Department of the Navy (DON) Climate Tabletop Exercise (DON Climate Action II) in partnership with the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability, April 27-28.

The tabletop exercise convened participants from the Department of Defense, federal agencies, Congress, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector to generate solutions in support of DON's comprehensive climate strategy, "Climate Action 2030," and broader sustainability goals. Under a recently realized academic partnership, NPS and the Doerr School will pursue identified solution sets in order to provide concrete actions and outcomes to advance the DON's climate priorities and sustainability initiatives.

“For the Department of the Navy, climate readiness is mission readiness: it makes us better warfighters,” said Meredith Berger, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Energy, Installations and Environment (EI&E) and the Navy’s Chief Sustainment Officer. “Our installations – whether at home or abroad – are where warfighting begins, our power projection platforms. We exercised elements and generated actions that ensure that these platforms are survivable and that the coastal communities that we call home are just as resilient.”

During the two-day event, participants concentrated on three focus areas – water security, energy security, and coastal resilience – and briefed their results to a group of senior leaders including Berger, NPS President retired Vice Adm. Ann Rondeau, and Dr. Arun Majumdar, dean of the Doerr School of Sustainability.

The six exercise teams – two for each focus area – worked to identify problem statements, challenges, and specific solutions. A common outcome among all team members was a deeper resolve, commitment to action and further collaboration.

Each team also spoke to the need to lowering barriers to establish and strengthen partnerships between DOD, industry, academia and civic leaders to leverage the combined talents and resources towards a shared goal of protecting our communities and people. The senior evaluation group committed to supporting these efforts and the applied research necessary to inform purposeful solution development with new incentives to stimulate investments.

Additionally, 90 days from the conclusion of the exercise, NPS will coordinate a plan of action and milestones across participant stakeholders on how to accomplish the following solutions identified during the exercise:

- Establish a partnership agreement between the Department of the Navy and the Port of San Diego to add the sharing of data and testing to improve climate resilience using the Port's Blue Economy project.
- Ensure installations have personnel identified to develop, manage, and advance their water policies with a focus on looking across the fenceline and viewing water as a shared resource.
- Develop a master plan framework that directly connects climate risk with readiness and mission assurance.

"The direction we have received from the President and our nation's defense leadership is clear – climate action is a national security imperative," said Rondeau. "Our future Navy and Marine Corps warfighters must be prepared to address and account for the effects of climate change in their operational planning. Here at NPS, we are proud to work with the Doerr School of Sustainability to address these challenges and seek out climate solutions that will benefit not only the Department of the Navy, but our nation as a whole."

The collaborative effort involving DON leadership and two prominent California educational institutions is the latest example of the Navy's commitment to pursue climate-informed solutions.

In May 2022, the Navy released "Climate Action 2030," building on a decades-long foundation of climate action, and setting the DON on a course to meet national and global targets to reduce the threat of climate change. In this strategy, Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro identified climate change as "one of the most destabilizing forces of our time, exacerbating other national security concerns and posing serious readiness challenges." He charged the DON with building a climate-ready force by increasing climate resilience and reducing the climate threat.

One month later, the Navy held its first Climate Tabletop Exercise in Washington, D.C., examining the impacts of climate change on Navy and Marine Corps missions, readiness, and warfighting capacity.

DON Climate Action II not only built upon the outcomes and lessons learned from the inaugural effort, it also capitalized on the Educational Partnership Agreement (EPA) between NPS and the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability, finalized in December 2022. Faculty from both institutions came together during the exercise to focus on coastal resilience and operational readiness in a world impacted by climate change.

“Building solutions to the challenges of climate change depends on turning knowledge and innovation into impactful solutions,” said Majumdar. “This tabletop exercise – along with the broader collaboration between Stanford University and the U.S. Navy – allows us to identify the connections and gaps in our knowledge. It then provides a forum for taking this wealth of insights, data, and information and laying the groundwork for solutions that make a difference.”

Berger is visiting NPS as part of a series of visits across the country from Earth Day to Arbor Day to demonstrate the work of the Department of the Navy and the EI&E portfolio to highlight the importance of Communities, Climate Action, and Critical Infrastructure.

The Naval Postgraduate School provides defense-focused graduate education, including classified studies and interdisciplinary research, to advance the operational effectiveness, technological leadership and warfighting advantage of the Naval service. For additional information, visit NPS online at <https://nps.edu>.