



Update: January 14, 2019



Raising Our Voices - Lopez Island, October 2019, and Shaw Island, December, 2018



GREETINGS:

The government shutdown has delayed the release of the Navy EIS regarding Growler expansion at NAS Whidbey Island. We still expect it to be released with absolutely no mitigation or any admission of extreme noise, disruption, and damage to Washington State citizens.

Regardless of what the Navy releases, IT'S NOT OVER! Some organizations, such as Citizens of Ebey's Reserve (COER), will respond with a lawsuit (legal). SDA plans continued pressure on our Elected Officials, including trying to get a rider on a bill in Congress limiting the Growler invasion (legislative), and finally, to continue to build public buy-in of the core message: #NoNewJetsNoNewFlights.

The Governor has received major feedback regarding the Navy's intrusion by air and sea - from whales, to extreme noise, to sonic sounds in the sea and extinction of the spotted owl in the Olympic National Forest due to electronic warfare training. The Washington Military Alliance is also now on his radar. Furthermore, there is resistance happening in Oak Harbor, Anacortes, Port Townsend, and Port Angeles.

We have the Navy's attention. Quiet Skies and the Sound Defense Alliance are not against the Navy, but we are refusing to be living in a war training zone.

Quiet Skies will be highlighting the damage being done by the Growlers to the whales, humans, and their impact on global climate change through public engagements this spring. For instance, one EA-18G Growler flying for an hour produces: (1) more CO2 than 12.7 round trips from Anacortes to New York in a Toyota Prius; (2) produces more CO2 than an hour of operation by the entire ferry fleet of four vessels serving the San Juan Islands or (3); produces more CO2 than that emitted by the generation of electricity sufficient for 7 average hours of electricity consumption of all of San Juan County. The National Park Conservation Association is conducting a study showing the effect of aircraft noise on sea life.

If you have not done this already, please sign up to be a member of the Sound Defense Alliance.
<https://sounddefensealliance.org/take-action/join-us/>. Donations to the Sound Defense Alliance are greatly appreciated.

Thanks to each of you for continuing to file jet noise reports ! Please continue. One way to demonstrate impact is with DATA!
sjcgis.org/aircraft-noise-reporting/

Navy moving forward after Growler impact negotiations fail

Sarah Doyle sdoyle@goanacortes.com Dec 5, 2018

Article from GoAnacortes Website:

https://www.goskagit.com/anacortes/news/navy-moving-forward-after-growler-impact-negotiations-fail/article_29f6a396-f818-11e8-989c-5b8fe57e5e3c.html?fbclid=IwAR2aNObVw_kY0fB5FtetvkOMMP1U6utFvygpKMn_oCg-5l2kPYAIWw2dV7o

Negotiations over mitigation for expansion plans at Naval Air Station Whidbey have failed, which likely means a short delay for the Navy and disappointment for those seeking bigger efforts to lessen the impacts of adding 36 Growler jets to the base.

The expansion aims to increase U.S. airborne electronic attack capabilities, but with it comes more noise, particularly around Coupeville and the Central Whidbey Island Historic District.

On Nov. 30, the Navy stopped working with officials and residents on mitigation strategies, Navy Public Affairs Officer Mike Welding said. The current expansion project has been in the works for five years and is waiting on the final go-ahead from the secretary of the Navy.

Welding said Navy personnel were expecting the final Record of Decision in November or early December, but that is delayed.

“It will be sometime in January,” Welding said.

Negotiations were triggered by potential impacts on historic properties, requiring a review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act overseen by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The independent federal agency has long advised such reviews be completed prior to a decision, said Reid Nelson, director of the Office of Federal Agency Programs for the Advisory Council.

However, NAS Whidbey Cultural Resource Manager Kendall Campbell said the negotiations were no longer productive, and there were fundamental differences in the desires of the parties compared to the goals of the National Historic Preservation Act’s Section 106 review requirements, which mandated the process in the first place.

“The state and the consulting parties really wanted to see more out of this process than it could provide,” Campbell said. “We got to a point where we were no longer addressing the concerns for the National Historic Preservation Act.”

Ending negotiations opens up a 45-day review period for the Advisory Council, which is legally required to make comments on the process. The Navy must then respond to complete its obligations, Welding said.

Negotiations were intended to produce a resolution addressing the adverse effects of added noise on historic landscapes in the reserve, and the group of consulting parties started working on it in August.

Washington Historic Preservation Officer Allyson Brooks, a consulting party, said the Navy refused to incorporate what others thought was best.

“The Navy wouldn’t take any other ideas besides their own,” Brooks said. “We felt there were more important mitigation strategies.”

The state asked for direct noise monitoring on historic properties, soundproofing and physical stabilization, Brooks said. Trust Board of Ebey’s Landing National Historic Reserve member Fran Einterz* said the board wanted reduced flight operations as well as increased mitigation funding.

“The Navy has yet to come up with mitigation in terms of operations,” Einterz said.

A Nov. 7 draft of mitigation strategies offered up to \$400,000 for preserving and protecting the historic Ferry House at Ebey’s Landing, up to \$75,000 for a preserve gateway entry sign, Environmental Protection Integration Program partnerships to support the creation of scenic easements and encouragement of Navy volunteer work.

That total of just under \$500,000 increased to an offer of \$1 million for mitigation by the end of the process, Campbell said. The consulting parties wanted between \$4 and \$8 million, in addition to asking the Navy to reduce the number of added flight operations at Outlying* Field Coupeville.

Though the negotiation process is over, there’s still more work to do, Campbell said. After the Advisory Council finishes its review of the process and comes up with recommendations, the input can be taken into consideration for next steps.

“We still are very committed on following through on mitigating the adverse effect,” Campbell said.

Nelson said in a prepared statement that the Navy will satisfy its responsibilities under Section 106 after considering and responding to the Advisory Council’s comments.

Campbell did not confirm or deny whether the latest \$1 million offer will still be implemented as part of mitigations.

National Park Service Operations Manager Roy Zipp said the Navy was negotiating in good faith and that the money would still be beneficial to the Ferry House. However, it’s hard to put a value on the increase in noise that will be imposed by the expansion, he said.

“The Navy listened to our concerns and acknowledged them and validated them,” Zipp said. “It’s a very difficult issue.”

Consulting parties involved in negotiations included the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation, the National Park Service, Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve, Island County commissioners, mayors of Coupeville and Port Townsend, the activist group Citizens of Ebey’s Reserve and concerned Coupeville resident David Day.

*Corrects Outlying and Einterz.

Editorial: Navy should return to talks on Growlers' impacts

The effects of a four-fold increase in flights at a Coupeville field warrant an agreement.

Sunday, December 9, 2018 1:30am OPINION IN OUR VIEW

Article from The Everett Herald:

<https://www.heraldnet.com/opinion/editorial-navy-should-return-to-talks-on-growlers-impacts/>

By The Herald Editorial Board

It may be simple to walk away from an agreement when there is no agreement, but a decision by the Navy to abandon talks regarding its Growler jets at Naval Air Station Whidbey means a poor outcome for Whidbey Island residents and those who visit Ebey's Landing National Historic Reserve and other nearby state parks on the island.

Nor does it serve the long-term interests of the Navy itself.

Military officials announced late last month that the U.S. Navy was walking away from discussions with federal, state and local stakeholders regarding how to address the impacts that will result from a planned increase of the number and flight operations of EA-18G Growler jets in squadrons based at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island.

A final announcement from the Navy is now expected in January regarding its plans to add up to 36 Growlers — which are used to jam communications and missile launch systems — to the squadrons of 82 jets currently based near Oak Harbor and significantly increase flight operations at a field near Coupeville and the 17,000-acre historic district that includes Ebey's Landing, part of the National Park Service.

The Navy announced late Nov. 30 that it was ending its talks with federal and state agencies and local groups regarding how to mitigate the negative impacts of the addition of jets and the increase of flight operations, specifically at a carrier landing training airfield — Outlying Field Coupeville — where the Navy says touch-and-go landings will jump significantly as early as next year.

The Coupeville field, southeast of Coupeville and north of the Keystone ferry landing, has long been used by the Navy for Growler since those jets replaced the Prowlers, but total flight operations there have numbered a little more than 5,000 a year in recent years. Under the proposal, the Navy plans to increase operations at the Coupeville field about four-fold to as many as 24,000 a year, an average of about 65 a day. Use of Ault Field at the Naval Air Station would actually decrease.

Because of those impacts, the Navy was obligated to enter into discussions, a requirement of the National Historic Preservation Act. But it wasn't obligated to reach an agreement with the others involved. The state initially asked the Navy to commit up to \$8 million in projects that would have supported direct noise monitoring and soundproofing and stabilization of historic structures in the district; others sought a reduction in the planned increase in operations at the Coupeville field.

The Navy has reportedly offered about \$1 million, but objected to proposals that it said were outside of its obligations to mitigate impacts in the historic district.

The Navy's walk-out and the limited mitigation it offered were coolly received.

The state’s historic preservation officer, Allyson Brooks, wrote in a letter to NAS Whidbey’s commanding officer that she would not sign on to the memorandum of agreement because the state and local community believe the mitigations offered were not adequate.

“It is most unfortunate that the efforts of our department, the Ebey’s Historical Reserve Trust Board, and the local community, all of whom offered other more proportional mitigation proposals, were summarily rejected by the U.S. Navy,” Brooks said in the letter.

U.S. Rep. Rick Larsen, D-Washington, long a supporter of the Navy bases in his district, said in an email to The Herald he was disappointed the Navy and others were unable to reach an agreement and pledged to work to find a solution.

Earlier in November, Larsen wrote Secretary of Navy Richard Spencer, noting that in a briefing to Congress on the Navy’s preferred alternative for NAS Whidbey’s Growlers, the Navy appeared to suggest it was seeking an increase “consistent with past level of airfield operations.” Larsen asked that the Navy address the discrepancy between that statement and the planned four-fold increase at the Coupeville field.

Absent a lawsuit, there’s not much requiring the Navy to do more to address the adverse effects of increased flight operations, particularly near Coupeville and the Ebey’s Landing district. But there’s little lost in returning to talks with those affected and working toward a solution that addresses most concerns.

As it does in Everett, the Navy has relationships — and a significant taxpayer investment — on Whidbey Island that it will want to continue to foster.

The Navy has for decades begged pardon for the noise from its jets, excusing their roar as “the sound of freedom.” But the Navy’s defense mission — as important as that is to the nation’s security and the training and safety of Navy sailors and aviators — doesn’t excuse it from its responsibilities to act as a good neighbor toward the communities that are its hosts.
