



Update January 2021

Navy Special Forces Training in Our State Parks by Larry Morrell

The vision statement of Washington's State Parks states that their parks "will be cherished destinations with natural, cultural, recreational, artistic, and interpretive experiences that all Washingtonians enjoy, appreciate, and proudly support."

The Navy has applied to expand use from 5 State Parks to 29 parks over Puget Sound, tripling the number of training sessions, increasing the number of trainees per session and adding high angle climbing in Deception Pass State Park.

Special Forces Operators have been successfully training for decades without the use of lands normally used for civilian recreation.

The question is "why are state parks so highly desired for special ops training? What do state parks have that military bases do not? Unwary civilians going about their business? This seems contradictory to everything about the vision of WA State Parks.

Although the Navy denies that unwary civilians are a key part of the training, the Navy has declined offers to train at deserted remote locations and disqualified Kodiak Island in Alaska as "not suitable," even though it has all the elements the Navy has asked for -- except for unwary civilians, of course.

The training revolves around exiting a submersible vessel, swimming to shore, proceeding undetected across a beach, then securing a hidden location from which to conduct "Special Reconnaissance" for up to 48 or 72 hours.

The process then reverses, and the trainees depart without leaving any evidence of their 2-3 day habitation.

Your Action is Needed

The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission is considering the application at their regular meeting on January 28, 2021. A special meeting has been planned for January 26th from 4pm to 8pm to allow for public comments.

"Live" comments from the public are limited to 3 minutes.

Add your voice in three ways:

- ❖ Comment on the Mitigated Determination of Nonsignificance by January 22nd
- ❖ Express your opinion in writing to the Commission describing your park experiences and how you would be impacted if the commission allowed regular, unannounced Special Reconnaissance by US Navy Special Forces in state parks. Comment here by January 26th.
- ❖ Sign up to comment in person (via Zoom) on January 26th (From 4pm to 8pm). Registration to speak is open from January 4 to January 20.

Watch this webpage

<https://parks.state.wa.us/1168/Navy-training-proposal>

for instructions to sign up. Speaking slots will be assigned randomly and if time runs out, not everyone will have an opportunity to speak.

Please sign up. This will be a key indicator to the commission on the importance of this issue to the public.

The Navy and Orca Whales

Close to Navy Aviation Station Whidbey Island (NASWI) and its fans, the Whidbey News-Times featured an article on a new environmental study. It shows that noise from the EA-18G Growlers goes deep into the ocean threatening the Orca's livelihood. link The December 11th article by Jessie Stensland, stated:

A new and first-of-its-kind study of underwater noise from EA-18G Growler aircraft in the water off Whidbey found that the sound levels are higher than the thresholds known to disturb orcas and other endangered marine animals.

The peer-reviewed study, "Above and below: Military aircraft noise in air and under water at Whidbey Island," was published in the Journal of Marine Science and Engineering on Nov. 16. The researchers placed a sound monitoring device in 100 feet of water off the end of a Naval Air Station Whidbey Island runway, as well as an above-ground instrument at a park next to the base.

Orcas use sound to hunt so noises underwater hurt their ability to feed themselves. In the December 5th edition of the Seattle Times, it reported that in "a paper published in the Journal of Marine Science and Engineering, scientists reported an underwater microphone anchored in nearly 100 feet of water offshore of the runway at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island distinctly picked up the sound of the jets, at levels known to affect orca behavior." link

Researcher Lauren Kuehne further stated: "Mentally I was prepared for noise, but I wasn't prepared for that; it was clear as a bell. It has given me a whole new appreciation; it was very shocking. We are just so deaf. We don't use our ears the way animals do. For them it is life and death." Quietskies' News Archive features the report in the Seattle Times on this webpage, dated December 5, 2020: <https://www.quietskies.info/regional-navy-impacts>

The Navy and Olympic National Park

In December several Letters to the Editor appeared in the Seattle Times regarding Growler noise over the Olympic National Park.

In an opinion piece on December 9th "Serene Olympic national Park is no place for noisy Navy Growlers," by Rob Smith link, regional Director of the National Park Conservation Association states

...the Hoh Rain Forest, a unique area on the west side of the Olympic Mountains, which was named the least noise-polluted place in the Lower 48 states by acoustic ecologist Gordon Hempton on his search for the quietest place in the nation. This world-famous place of quiet solitude now averages 57 minutes of jet fighter noise every day.

A Navy and Marine Corps Veteran in aviation published a letter to the editor December 18th called "Navy Growlers: No need for this destruction." link

In the same publication yet another letter to the editor appeared by a student at the University of WA in environmental studies: "One of the Last Quiet Places," referring to Olympic National Park.

The News-Tribune out of Tacoma published a December 7th article "Quietest place in U.S. hammered by military aircraft noise. Why it matters" referring to the same study.

Report Jet Noise

<https://gis.sanjuanco.com/aircraft-noise-reporting>.

If you need hints for how to enter your noise report, check here:

<https://www.quietskies.info/access-the-county-report-site>

Noisy Weeks in San Juan County

We experience the most jet noise in San Juan County when the Growlers are doing Field Carrier Landing Practice (FCLP) at Ault Field near Oak Harbor.

Since September FCLP training was almost exclusively at the Outlying Field (OLF) near Coupeville. This week training is at both locations. We are experiencing many flyovers.

But what about the loud rumbling sound that rattled your house (and brain) this Fall? We can hear that any time jets are flying regardless of which airfield they are using for FCLPs.

All Growlers are kept at Ault Field. Before takeoff the pilot will run up the engine for testing. Depending on the wind direction and runway used the gut rumble can be experienced in SJC.

Report Jet Noise

<https://gis.sanjuanco.com/aircraft-noise-reporting>.

If you need help there are hints here. <https://www.quietskies.info/access-the-county-report-site>

You can also send an email to ask for help: quietskiessanjuan@gmail.com

Also consider sending comments to the Navy at (360) 257-6665, or via e-mail: COMMENTS.NASWI@navy.mil

Check out our websites:

www.quietskies.info

<https://sounddefensealliance.org>