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**Quietskies**

**Over San Juan County**

**Update: October, 2015**

**Greetings:**

San Juan County has been barraged with Growler noise this last week! Time for a break.

Take the Growler Quiz . . . see what you know or don't know or would like to know about our neighbors to the south.

Quiet Skies is working on a campaign to start pushing on our legislators for Growler noise mitigation. We've been told from Representative Larson's office that they haven't been hearing from us and they "assumed" the noise isn't bothering us.

Contact him:

Honorable Representative Rick Larsen (WA 2nd District)

2113 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515

Phone: (202) 225-2605 (Washington D.C.)

Phone: (425) 252-3188 (Everett Office)

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Website:   [www.larsen.house.gov/office/washington-dc](http://www.larsen.house.gov/office/washington-dc)

rick.larsen@mail.house.gov

Our next Growler Update will be out soon with ideas for how to get our legislators attention!

\*\*\*\*\*But for now, take the quiz.

**GROWLER QUIZ!**

How much do you know about our neighbors - "the Growlers"?

**1. How many Growlers are based at the Naval Air Station on Whidbey Island (NASWI)?**

**ANSWER:** 82 EA-18G Growlers are based at NASWI. The Navy's current Environmental Impact Statement proposes the addition of 36 Growlers which would all be based at NASWI.

**2. True or False? The Growlers have been quieter lately.**

**ANSWER:** Both true and false. Although Growler noise from Ault Field seemed less from April through early August, on Monday, August 10th the noise returned with steady roars, and huge blasts in the 80 decibel range with one measured at 120 dBA inside homes. They are back in force.

**3. True or False? The Growlers are only a noise problem for South Lopez Island.**

**ANSWER:** False. Growler noise is distinguished by its signature low frequency sound which reaches far into San Juan County, Island County, parts of the mainland, and Victoria Canada. Night practice at Ault Field until 11, 12 and 1am is especially disturbing to our county. Check out the San Juan County noise map to see the impacts:

 sjcgis.org/aircraft-noise-reporting/

Use that site to report your own noise experience often - it's data we can use to show our legislators what's happening.

**4. Are San Juan County property values affected by Growler noise?**

**ANSWER:** We don't know yet. In response to increased noise, Lopez and some San Juan Island Realtors have included the following disclosure on Form

17, the Seller Disclosure Statement for Improved Property: "All SJC properties may be affected by aircraft noise from Whidbey Island Naval Air Station".

This could be discouraging to potential home buyers. We do know of two families who have moved from South Lopez to escape the noise.

**5. True or False? Growler complainers are mostly a bunch of Lopezians.**

**ANSWER:** False. It’s true that Lopez is significantly impacted by Growler noise generated at Ault Field but communities around the region are also complaining and asking for mitigation. The Coupeville area receives huge amounts of noise from low flying growlers practicing Field Carrier Land Practice at the Out Lying Field at Coupeville. Port Townsend also receives noise from operations at Coupeville. The Olympic Peninsula is now threatened by the noise and the plans for an electromagnetic warfare training range over the Olympic National Forest and Olympic National Park. Port Townsend, Port Angeles, Sequim and Forks are all resisting this expansion of the Growler training range. Anacortes is also concerned about increased noise. Growler noise and training operations are a regional problem.

**6. Why is one of the noisiest jets in the military based in N.W. Washington, a region noted for its peaceful, quiet and pristine environment? Give at least 4 reasons.**

**ANSWER:** Here are a few reasons Growlers are based at NASWI:

A. Oak Harbor lobbied hard for the one billion dollars (Navy estimate) NASWI contributes to their economy.

B. Representative Rick Larsen and Senator Murray lobbied for the Growler mission and continue to push for maximum expansion to a Premiere Base that would not be exposed to base closure.

C. Wide open airspace and relatively low population is a plus. Until recently the Navy has had little resistance to its use of the airspace over the entire state.

D. The Navy was not truthful in the 2005 Environmental Assessment when it portrayed the Growler jet as being quieter that the Prowler it was replacing. Prowlers do not have after burners and do not generate the intense low frequency vibration which rattles our bodies and our homes and is the signature of the Growler.

E. The Growlers are an important part of the Navy expansion going on in our region in response to President Obama's Policy of "Pivot to the East". The military is looking to expand air, land and sea training opportunities across Washington State.

**7. What are Representative Larsen and Senators Murray and Cantwell doing to help mitigate the noise impacts of the Growlers in our county and the region?**

**ANSWER:**

REPRESENTATIVE LARSEN has been responsive to San Juan County while maintaining a firm position of supporting the expansion of NASWI into a Premiere Base. In December of 2014 he sent out his long-term strategy for addressing the impacts Growler noise in our region. He is exploring the following ideas with the Navy:

1) Reducing noise from engine testing by building a Hush House.

2) Reducing engine noise by adding chevrons which could muffle jet noise without sacrificing engine performance.

3) Reducing Future flights by using software which could reduce the amount of training pilots need before deploying to a carrier.

4) Expanded sound monitoring which would include adding sound measurements in San Juan County to the current Environmental Impact Statement.

5) Growler Schedule for Ault Field.

6) Improved use of data from the San Juan County jet noise website.

We have not, however, seen any results.

SENATOR MURRAY: Other than joining Representative Larsen to suggest a Hush House, Senator Murray has been silent, rarely responding to constituent letters requesting mitigation of Growler noise.

SENATOR CANTWELL: Senator Cantwell has no official position on the Growlers and their impact on San Juan County residents. The Senator states that her staff is monitoring the situation and sends out form letters that do not relate well to constituent concerns.

**8. True or false? The San Juan County Council is working with the Navy on noise mitigation.**

**ANSWER:** True. Councilman Stephens has taken the lead on this issue and continues to push for solutions to the noise problem which include: publishing a weekly training schedule for Ault Field, technology for quieting engines, noise abatement structures on the runways, and taking actual noise measurements in San Juan County.

In the last year Councilman Stephens has met with the Navy and citizens, invited Representative Larsen to Lopez to discuss Growlers, made sure San Juan County had a Scoping meeting for the current Navy Environmental Impact Statement, and established a county website for Jet noise reporting.

**9. True or False? The Navy publishes a weekly schedule of Growler training operations for Ault Field on North Whidbey Island.**

**ANSWER:** False. The Navy publishes a weekly training schedule for the Outlying Field at Coupeville. San Juan County is not affected by operations at Coupeville. Our noise comes from Ault Field. For the last two years the Navy has refused to provide an Ault Field training schedule which would help San Juan County residents plan their lives around the Growler noise which usually comes in 2-3 hour blocks and often goes into the late night hours.

**10. How many Field Carrier Landing Practice operations happened at Ault Field in 2014?**

a. 6,072

b. 10,327

c. 13,448

**ANSWER:** c. 13,448. NASWI can legally expand that number to 18,282 which may happen if 36 Growlers are added to the base.

ONE LAST TIDBIT ABOUT GROWLERS: At an operating expense of between $35,000 and $45,000 per hour, Growlers consume more than 1300 gallons of fuel per hour and emit 12.5 metric tons of CO2/ hour. A single hour of flight in one Growler uses more fuel than the average Washington citizen uses in a year.

**11. What is not covered in this quiz?**

**ANSWER:** Decibel readings, adverse health effects from noise and a whole lot more! Check out the websites below.

**12. What can we do to restore our quiet skies?**

**ANSWER:** Continuing to email or write to our legislators about our concerns is the strongest action right now. They need to know that San Juan County does not want to be collateral damage for the Growler mission. We want noise mitigation and the 6 points listed in question #7 are a good place to start. Growler information, legislator contact addresses and current news can be found on the Quiet Skies website.

 www.quietskies.info

For more information on the bigger picture and regional Growler news:

http://westcoastactionalliance.org/

http://citizensofebeysreserve.com/