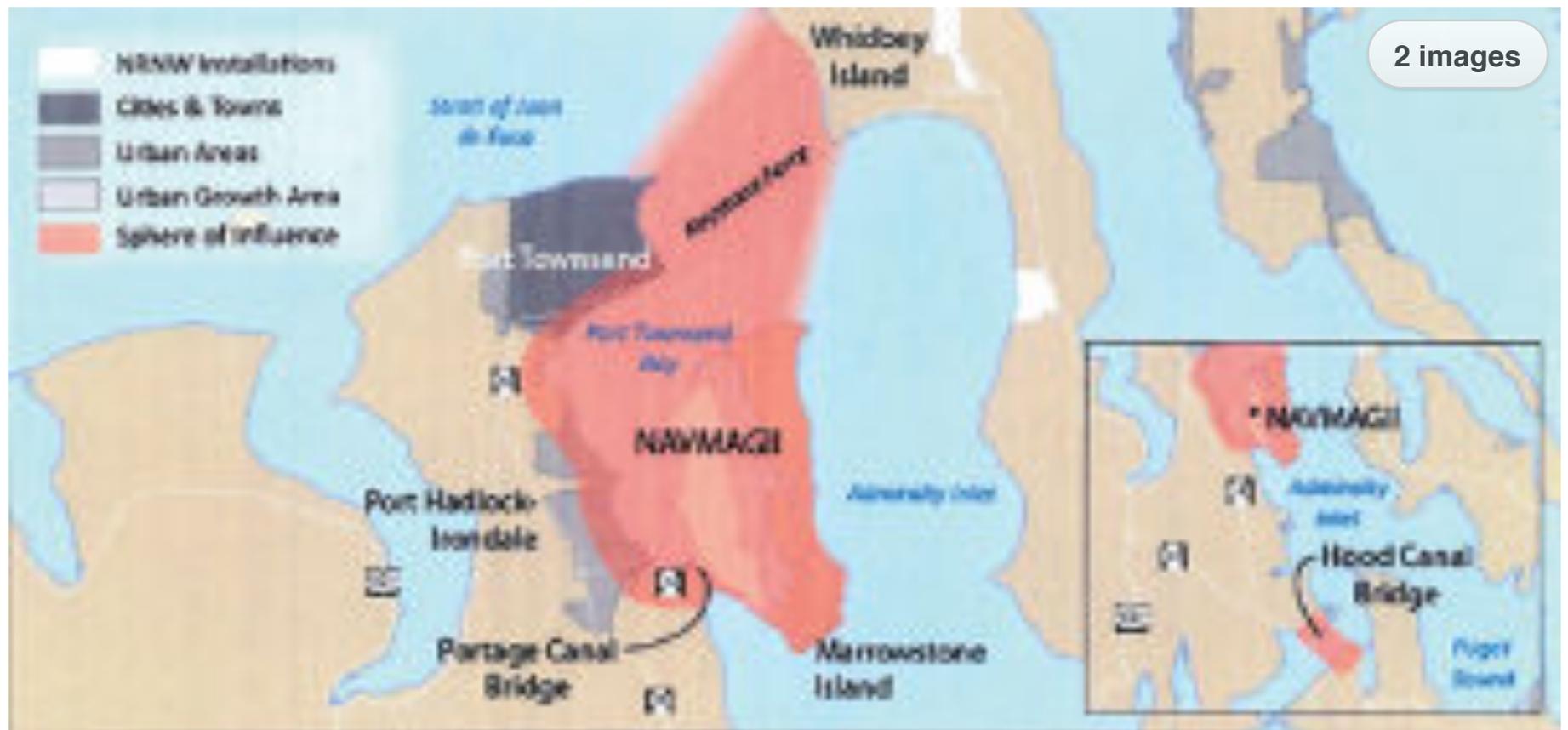


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Jefferson, Kitsap engage in land-use compatibility study with U.S. Navy grant



Naval Magazine Indian Island's sphere of influence, as the Navy describes it, "encompasses the region where the installation conducts its operation, where an action or change could cause an impact to the installation's operation and where the commanding officer has responsibility," according to a project narrative on a joint land use study for Naval Base Kitsap and Naval Magazine Indian Island in Kitsap, Jefferson and Mason counties. Courtesy map

By Allison Arthur | Posted 12 months ago

Land uses are being evaluated as they relate to U.S. Navy operations at Naval Base Kitsap, in Kitsap County, and Naval Magazine Indian Island, in Jefferson County.

Jefferson County commissioners recently approved an interlocal agreement with Kitsap County and accepted a \$43,000 grant from the Department of Defense, Office of Economic Adjustment, to work on a joint land use study (JLUS). The entire project is costing \$658,840 and is set to be completed by the end of 2015. Kitsap is getting the lion's share of the funding as the lead agency that has more Navy-related issues than Jefferson County.

"Under Washington State Growth Management Act, local governments are required to consider compatible land-use planning around military installations," explained Liane Nakahara, public affairs officer for Naval Magazine Indian Island and public affairs specialist for the Navy Region

Northwest. “The JLUS process will help review the planning that has been done and further articulate compatible land-use planning goals around Naval Base Kitsap and Naval Magazine Indian Island.”

Project gets started

Jefferson County Department of Community Development (DCD) planner Joel Peterson has been assigned as the liaison with Kitsap County. He said he’s just getting started.

“They are concerned about their operations running submarines and having people out of the way,” Peterson said of his understanding of one issue in Jefferson County. “For us, it would also be Naval Indian Island Magazine and the buffer around the shoreline.”

Peterson said the Navy also would want to have a say in any plans regarding State Route 19, the transportation route from Navy Base Kitsap across Hood Canal Bridge on SR 104 to Indian Island.

The Navy outlined its concerns in a 12-page project narrative. In Jefferson County, issues it wants addressed are:

- Port Hadlock and Irondale being identified as a major urban growth area
- Shoreline development, recreation boat traffic and buoy permits as they relate to Naval Magazine Indian Island operations
- Traffic concerns on the ordnance route from the railhead in Kitsap County to Naval Magazine Indian Island
- Anti-terrorism/force protection as it relates to the island’s “extensive shoreline”
- Commercial light and small aircraft traffic over Naval Magazine Indian Island
- Tidal energy generators proposed for Admiralty Inlet
- Maritime issues, including environmental regulations, finfish aquaculture and endangered aquatic species
- Frequency spectrum “as demands for increased access to, and reliance on a scarce resource, operational and safety impacts are an issue of compatibility concern.”

The last concern relates to radio frequency, according to Nakahara.

“Nationally, there is an ever increasing demand for access to the radio frequency spectrum among all users, from cell phones to tablets, and even garage door openers, not to mention the capability and interoperability for law enforcement and other emergency responders,” she said.

“At Naval Magazine Indian Island, we use various communications devices, including radios, to safely and effectively perform our day-to-day operations, and externally when our fire and emergency services personnel respond to calls for service out in the community,” she added.

Frequencies come into play in another way, too. There have been reports over the years, from residents in Kala Point, for example, that garage door openers don’t work when an aircraft

carrier is at the Indian Island pier.

Encroachment issues

The timing of the land-use plan is good from Jefferson County's standpoint. Planners are just getting started on updating the county comprehensive plan, Peterson said.

"That's due in 2016, so we'll be able to integrate some of the findings with that update," said Peterson, who was pulled off planning duties for a sewer in the Tri-Area when state funding fell through.

DCD director Carl Smith said Jefferson County needs to be involved with any Navy concerns about compatibility issues.

"It puts a focus on our needs as a county. We have needs to grow, provide for economic development, provide for housing, so we want to help the Navy be aware of our plans and our goals," Smith said.

Smith said the JLUS would address emergency planning issues at Naval Magazine Indian Island, such as where ships with explosive ordnance might be taken, should there be a fire.

"Yes, we would like to know what they think they will do in the case of emergencies," Smith said.

District 3 County Commissioner John Austin, D-Port Ludlow, said the county has an interest in open space, preserving the natural environment and ensuring the quality of life in Jefferson County. Planning efforts also should protect watersheds.

Stakeholders, benefits

The project narrative – available online at

ptleader.com – doesn't mention watersheds or preservation of land, but it does suggest jurisdictions that should be involved in the study, including Port Townsend as well as Port Ludlow, Quilcene and Brinnon in Jefferson County.

Various regional councils and tribes, state agencies and special purpose districts also are to be involved, as is Mason County.

"Probably the greatest benefit to be derived from the effort will be the development and implementation of a sustainable communication mechanism among and between the affected communities and military installation, which will provide for the ongoing discussion of issues, challenges and concerns, and realistic approaches for addressing those issues, challenges and concerns," the narrative states.

There also is to be a major public outreach, awareness and education campaign component.

Changes in the contract are still being negotiated, and Peterson said last week that those negotiations could push the community involvement work back to spring or summer.

Related military issues

The JLUS was approved by Jefferson County commissioners as a consent-agenda item on Jan.

The study comes as the U.S. Navy announced last month that it teamed up with the Trust for Public Land in December to secure 1,420 acres near Quilcene as a buffer for its Naval Base Kitsap operations, based at Bangor.

Those properties were acquired through a separate tool, as Nakahara calls the Defense Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI).

The Navy's land-use study in Jefferson is related to the REPI effort, because both are aimed at preventing encroachment or incompatible development around military installations or ranges, Nakahara said.

The submarine base at Bangor supports the Pacific Fleet, and the adjacent Dabob range on Hood Canal is considered a vital strategic asset. The Navy also has the Quinault Underwater Tracking Range between Pacific Beach in Grays Harbor County and Kalaloch in West Jefferson County.

Nakahara noted that the land-use study under way does not identify areas for the military to purchase, but rather "suggests policies or practices to ensure future land-use planning compatibility."

The Navy's land-use agreement and its purchase of 1,420 acres in Jefferson County coincide with a discussion in Port Townsend in January of the Navy's Air Station Whidbey Island operations and concerns about an increase in touch-and-go landings at Outlying Field Coupeville by EA-18G Growler jets to simulate landing on aircraft carriers.



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