MY TURN | Is Navy taking safety seriously?

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The Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) for Naval Base Kitsap and Naval Magazine Indian Island is tasked to look at ways to reduce potential conflicts between military installations and surrounding areas.

The Draft JLUS for Naval Base Kitsap and Naval Magazine Indian Island was published online July 28, 2015. Public meetings were held in Chimacum on August 4, and <u>August 11 in</u> <u>Bremerton</u>. The Navy's \$675,000 study is expected to be completed by the end of 2015.

The Guidance Manual for the Department of Defense JLUS program states, "The JLUS program relies on strong community planning ... The JLUS program is community controlled and community directed."

However, if the community is never informed of the Navy's intentions, or of existing or potential land use conflicts, the community cannot be involved in the process in any significant way.

The 40-page guidance manual for the DoD JLUS program specifically directs planners to include "explosives, safety quantity distances from ammunition storage that may affect land outside the base, external radio frequency interference, and electromagnetic radiation effects on adjacent land."

None of the above is identified in the JLUS even though explosive material for Naval Magazine Indian Island is brought by rail to Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor and then transported by truck to the ammunition depot at Indian Island.

And the submarine base at Bangor soon will be handling explosives equal to up to 7.44 million pounds of TNT in the form of rocket motor propellant at its two explosives handling wharves in Hood Canal.

Instead, the Navy's JLUS references citizens' concerns as "fears" and "urban myths" and falsely informs the public that explosives are handled "in accordance with requirements" set by the Navy.

In 2016, 137 homes on the north end of Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor will be in a blast zone when the second explosives handling wharf (EHW-2) on Hood Canal becomes operational. Marine traffic currently passes through the blast zone for EHW-1 in Hood Canal.

No Navy housing is within the larger blast zone for the wharves. The Navy appropriated a total of \$32.2 million to move or fortify buildings on the base within the blast zone for EHW-2.

In 2012, the Department of Defense Explosives Safety Board (DDESB), the agency responsible for explosives safety siting for all DoD facilities, refused to approve the location for EHW-2 at Bangor.

The DDESB proposed that the Navy conduct a study to prove an accident involving one missile would not "promptly propagate" to the other 23 missiles on the submarine, and the resulting explosion at one explosives handling wharf would not "promptly propagate" to another suspended missile or submarine at the adjacent explosives handling wharf.

According to public court records, the DDESB wished to know whether "the blast waves would coalesce" as a single explosive source.

The Navy determined that a study to satisfy concerns raised by the DDESB was not "feasible" and on March 28, 2012, accepted all risk at the explosives handling wharves for the entire operational life of the wharves — presumably as long as 50 to 60 years or longer.

A Navy document written by Captain Gilbert of the Naval Ordnance Safety and Security Activity, dated January 25, 2012, explained the underlying problem. The Bangor base should have been 1.3 miles longer for safe explosives handling distances between the Delta Pier, EWH-1 and EHW-2.

The record, released on August 14, 2013, states, "The combined effect of siting the EHWs and Refit Complex (which is the Delta Pier at Bangor) would have required lengthening both submarine bases by approximately 1.3 miles. That degree of expansion was not available, when the bases were developed, and would be that much more difficult today, requiring large acquisitions and displacement of residences outside the current base boundaries."

The 2012 record states that the problem with land use will only get worse. Captain Gilbert concluded, "This delta will only widen, as SSBN and SSGN platforms are replaced with new submarines that may be tasked with combined missions."

The JLUS currently is accepting comments on the draft report until August 28, but your comments will not be included in the final report unless approved by the Navy. See www.kiijlus.com.

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