

CITIZENS OF EBHEY'S RESERVE

protecting our land, homes, and health

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Navy's Plan to Increase 'Growler' Operations Draws Criticism Promise of Legal Challenge

The Navy's recently announced plans to increase 'Growler' jet training over Whidbey Island has drawn fire from one citizen organization, led to the formation of another, and prompted the Town of Coupeville to hire their own noise experts to scrutinize the Navy's plan.

The Navy plans were outlined in a required Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) that is supposed to have studied the potential impacts of its planned expansion and identified alternatives for public consideration and comment. The Navy did not begin its self-conducted environmental study until after Growler operations began.

"The Navy's actions violate our democratic principles and harm the very people the Navy is sworn to protect," said Ken Pickard, President of Citizens of Ebey's Reserve. COER has been at the forefront of efforts to halt Navy Growler operations that have become a source of complaints from communities throughout the Puget Sound. Growler noise impacts in Central Whidbey have already created what one health expert labeled a "public health emergency."

The Navy's "Preferred" alternative for expanding Growler Operations would:

- Increase low-level training operations at its Outlying Field (OLF) near Coupeville from 6,250 operations a year to 35,100 - almost a 600% increase.
- Increase noise footprints and expose up to 3,446 children to greater than 65 dB DNL— which research shows to cause decreases in learning, reading, comprehension, cognitive abilities with a host of other adverse health and behavioral impacts. The noise can interrupt classroom learning up to 45 times per hour. (Navy DEIS.)
- Increase Growler operations from North Whidbey Island and noise impacts over Port Townsend, Anacortes and San Juan Islands – including Lopez Island where more than 5000 complaints were registered on a Growler noise 'hot-line.'
- Increase impacts on Deception Pass State Park, where Growler noise drives away visitors at a loss of \$1000 a day in park fees alone. (Seattle Times)

All of the Navy's 'alternative' scenarios will increase noise, health harms and other adverse impacts. The Navy's "no action alternative" would continue Growler operations that currently expose people in homes, schools, parks and businesses to noise that exceeds community standards set by the State of Washington, the EPA, the Occupational and Health Administration (OSHA), and the World Health Organization.

"Asking citizens to choose from the Navy's list of alternatives is like asking us which club we want to be beaten with," said COER member Bob Wilbur. "The Navy's desired number of flyovers will force homeowners to sell their unlivable properties at huge losses."

According to COER, the Navy's Environmental Study is flawed by design, in part, because the Navy did not take a single real-time measurement of noise experienced by communities. Instead, the Navy used unreliable computer modeling that averaged periods of noisy over-flights with days of silence when jets did not fly. National noise experts say this is an invalid misuse of the noise metric.

The National Park Service recently completed a sound study of Growler noise impacts over Ebey's Landing Historic Reserve and concluded that Growler noise is a problem requiring serious attention. Because of Navy Growlers, the once peaceful Reserve is now the loudest National Park in the Nation.

The Navy will issue a final Environmental Impact Statement and decision after it 'considers' public comments on the Draft EIS. The National Environmental Policy Act only requires the Navy to seriously study potential harms and alternatives. However, the Navy can still choose the most harmful action alternative.

COER is urging the public to reject all of the Navy's proposals and has vowed to continue its political and legal efforts to oppose Growler operations over populated and environmentally sensitive areas.

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