

Subject: OBJECTION Pacific Northwest Electronic Warfare Range

Dear Reviewing Officer, Reta LaFord:

Olympic Park Associates (OPA) appreciates this opportunity to **object** to the issuance of a Forest Service Special Permit that would allow the change of venue of an electromagnetic warfare training range from Idaho to the western half of the Olympic Peninsula. The mission of Olympic Park Associates is "To protect the wilderness and ecological integrity of Olympic National Park".

OPA objects to the Special Use Permit, as proposed November 29, 2016, being issued.

We also request that an extension of time be given for comments to the *USDA Forest Service Special Use Permit as proposed, November 29, 2016*.

We ask that a meeting be held with Superintendent Reta LaFord, Olympic National Forest (ONF), so that all objectors to the permit may ask questions and provide documents when relevant.

USFS Inability to Properly Vet and Manage Special Permits

Based on the many NEPA violations OPA has observed in the processing of this Special Permit, we are concerned that the Forest Service cannot properly determine NEPA requirements or manage the vetting and operation of the Special Permit issued. According to the Inspector General's report, Forest Service Administration of Special Use Program issued June 2011, OPA argues that the following problems must be solved to insure that the permit can be properly vetted and managed.

"Though we found that FS special use employees are highly committed to protecting the natural resources within the National Forest System, FS lacks the resources it needs to properly manage the Special Use Program... Additionally, FS lacks the timely access to specialized personnel it needs to perform certain required reviews—such as National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) reviews" [p. 1, Inspector General's Forest Service Administration of Special Use Program issued June 2011]

Further:

"When FS approves a special use authorization within a national forest, the agency also establishes a period for that use, and at the end of the period the authorization expires. We found that more than 3,500 special use authorizations have expired but are still being treated as active. This occurred because FS did not have effective procedures for dealing with expiring authorizations, and also lacked the staff to address the backlog. Continuing to allow authorization holders to use expired authorizations unnecessarily encumbers FS lands and restricts the land's availability for other public uses. Further, FS' practice of allowing authorizations to continue without formally renewing them also allows the agency to circumvent its requirement to perform NEPA reviews of ongoing land uses." [p. 2, Inspector General's Forest Service Administration of Special Use Program issued June 2011]

The following speaks to our point:

"After considering comments from the public and the environmental effects described in the 2014 EW Range EA, I have determined that the actions of modified Alternative 1 will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared." [p. 9, The Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact, Pacific Northwest Electronic Warfare Range]

OPA argues if the training request is continued to be pursued by the U. S. Navy that the process can only be considered in an EIS. The complexity of this project and the lack of answers provided in the EA requires nothing less.

The USDA Forest Service Special Use Permit as proposed, November 29, 2016, for the use by the U. S. Navy for electromagnetic training in Olympic National Forest only considers the Navy needs, NOT the needs of the Olympic

Peninsula's environment. It essentially dismisses as not significant, the effects of this training area on the local wildlife, on the local permanent human population and on the millions of tourists who visit the Peninsula each year.

"The project is limited in scope and duration and is designed to minimize environmental effects through mitigation measures (2014 EW Range EA, Section 3.1.1.5; this document, Appendix C, Exhibit B). The Pacific Northwest EW range activities will be localized to specific sites within the Pacific Ranger District. Mobile Electronic Warfare Training System vehicles will utilize 11 pullout sites along NFS roads, using 3 sites per day, for 8 to 16 hours per day for approximately 250 days per year. The EW range activities will be authorized under a SUP for a duration of 5 years. Based on these factors, I believe the effects of this project will be localized, and will not contribute to significant environmental effects within or beyond the project area." [p. 9, The Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact, Pacific Northwest Electronic Warfare Range]

OPA asks, "What mitigation measures?" While the Forest Service may portray this project as limited in scope, the issuing of this special permit will significantly affect the Olympic Peninsula's environment.

The Forest Service has attempted to reduce its responsibilities to the environment in this project while at the same time using the need of the Navy to train jet pilots as a justification for the Special Use Permit. This training has been done in Idaho and Nevada and practiced in the Middle East for many years. OPA argues that Special Use Permits should only be given IF the activity cannot be done anywhere else, especially when there are unanswered environmental questions.

The need for the Special Use Permit is not just for the operation of emitter trucks, as is claimed in the Decision Notice, the Navy desires it because the pilots training will find the emitter trucks by using search patterns flown over the western Olympic Peninsula. No emitter trucks would be needed if jet pilots didn't need to find them as part of their flight training.

The USFS reasoning in its decision is an attempt by the Forest Service and U.S. Navy to evade its responsibility to the environment of the western part of the Olympic Peninsula and the Olympic National Forest and ignores the Guiding Principles of the USFS, itself. (<https://www.fs.fed.us/about-agency/what-we-believe>) This permit will also require these pilots to use the airspace over Olympic National Park (ONP); Washington Islands Wilderness; Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary; the Washington Islands National Wildlife Refuges; Washington State Department of Natural Resources land; Quinault, Quileute, and Hoh Reservations; thousands of acres of private land, including the communities of Forks and Amada Park.

"A full range of environmental issues were considered for evaluation at the outset of the process. Certain resources were eliminated from detailed study in the 2014 EW Range EA because research revealed that the proposed action and alternatives were unlikely to have any potential environmental impacts on these resources, or that impacts would be negligible (2014 EW Range EA, p. 3.0-2, Table 3.0-1). The analysis considered the direct and indirect impacts of the project and their contribution to potential cumulative impacts (2014 EW Range EA, p. 3.0-1). The key findings for potential impacts from vehicle noise, and mobile emitter generator noise, and electromagnetic radiation are summarized below." [p. 10, The Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact, Pacific Northwest Electronic Warfare Range]

Again, the statement ignores the fact that jet formation flights over the Peninsula are a part of the project. OPA argues the USFS has not done due diligence in its preparation for consideration of the Navy's activity in and over the Olympic National Forest. The USFS has evaded its responsibilities for the environment of the Olympic Forest and the surrounding area. It has totally relied on the applicant's studies and bias for input on the effects of these planned operations. OPA argues the conclusions come to in the Decision were from non-existent "facts" or studies limited in scope and therefore did not provide the answers needed to fulfill the environmental concerns of this project. The vast majority of scientific research pertinent to this activity has only been available for the last few years and all of it has been ignored. Had it been considered it would be clear there is substantial risk to wildlife and the tourist economy.

The nearly daily noise of a continual Blue Angel-show type noise over the public and private lands of the Peninsula for 12-16 hours a day has been dismissed as not significant. The refusal of the Navy and Forest Service to acknowledge that the convenience of the proposed training range to the Whidbey Naval Station and a \$5 million dollar saving to the Navy budget cannot compare to the vast effects on the people who live and vacation on the Peninsula. This position is self-serving and blind to the reality of what will happen to the environment and the economy of the area when the permit is issued.

Inaccurate Description of Proposed Activities

Based on the July 21, 2016 Biological Opinion, there are naval activities planned that were not revealed in the Draft USFS EA in 2014. Such as:

“Air Combat Maneuvers: 550 per year; 95% daytime, 5% nighttime; typically 2 but up to 4 aircraft per event. 110 events per year use chaff/flares. For flights over land in the Olympic MOAs, the minimum flight altitude is typically greater than 4,000 ft above ground level for 90 percent of the airspace. When flying in the MOAs, Navy aircraft do not fly at the outer edges of the MOAs, to prevent spilling out of the airspace. **Navy aircraft will not be lower than 2000 ft above ground level.** Seventy percent of all Navy flights in the MOAs are above 20,000 ft and 95 percent of all flights are above 10,000 ft.” [p. 24 Table 2. Proposed Training Activities., USFWS Biological Opinion on US Navy proposed NW Training and Testing Program, July 21, 2016]

Further:

“The Navy’s training and testing activities occur in three subunits of the action area: 1) the offshore component (Offshore Area Subunit); 2) the inland waters of Puget Sound (Inland Waters Subunit), and 3) **the Olympic MOA Subunit on the Olympic Peninsula.** These are described below. The Navy used these three subunits as their National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) action area and analyzed the effects of the NWT activities within these areas.

“However, for the purposes of Section 7 consultation under the ESA, the action area is based on the maximum extent of the direct and indirect effects of the action on the environment, which is an area larger than that identified by the Navy for their NEPA documentation.” [p. 48, USFWS Biological Opinion on US Navy proposed NW Training and Testing Program, July 21, 2016]

“6.1.1 Special Use Airspace

“The Special Use Airspace in the Offshore Area (Figure 2) is comprised of W-237, which extends westward off the coast of northern Washington State and is divided into nine sub-areas (A–H and J). The eastern boundary of W-237 lies 3 nm (3.5 miles) off the coast of Washington. The Special Use Airspace of W-237 extends from the ocean surface to the ceiling of the airspace, which varies between 27,000 ft (8,200 m) above Mean Sea Level (MSL) in areas E, H, and J; 50,000 ft (15,200 m) above MSL in areas A and B; and unlimited in areas C, D, F, and G.

Confusing Data on Noise Levels and Damage

As stated above: “Navy aircraft will not be lower than 2000 ft above ground level.” And “The MOAs lower limit is 6,000 ft (1,800 m) above MSL but not below 1,200 ft above ground level.” FAA Advisories consider 5000 feet (AGL) to be the minimum altitude to minimize impacts over natural areas. So clearly the credibility of the finding of no significant impact is at question.

“The Olympic MOAs Subunit overlays both land (the Olympic Peninsula) and sea (extending to 3 nm off the coast of Washington over the Pacific Ocean). **The MOAs lower limit is 6,000 ft (1,800 m) above MSL but not below 1,200 ft above ground level,** and the upper limit is up to, but not including, 18,000 ft (5,500 m) above MSL, with a total area of 1,614 square nautical miles (nm²). Above the Olympic MOAs is the Olympic Air Traffic Control Assigned Airspace, which is under the control of the Federal Aviation Administration. This airspace has a floor coinciding with the Olympic MOAs ceiling. The controlled airspace has an upper limit of 35,000 ft (10,700 m) above MSL.” [p. 50, USFWS Biological Opinion on US Navy proposed NW Training and Testing Program, July 21, 2016]

OPA cannot fathom the Navy's reasoning expressed in these conflicting statements of their activities in the area. OPA also argues that the dBA figures claimed have inaccurate baselines. As seen in the footnote following, the Navy claims decibels EXPECTED to be less than 85 dBA at an altitude of 5,000 ft.

"2 (footnote) Aircraft use associated with EW training over the Olympic Military Operations Areas was addressed in the 2010 NWTRC EIS/OEIS (Navy, 2010) and reanalyzed in the Navy's 2015 Northwest Training and Testing Final EIS/OEIS (Navy, 2015) which includes an airspace noise analysis for the Olympic Military Operations Areas. The 2015 Northwest Training and Testing EIS (p. 3.0-37) notes that: "Based on the results of that study, sound exposure levels at the sea surface or on land from most air combat maneuver overflights are expected to be less than 85 dBA (based on an EA-18G aircraft flying at an altitude of 5,000 ft. [1,524 m] and at a subsonic airspeed [400 knots]). Exposure to fixed-wing aircraft noise would be brief (seconds) as an aircraft quickly passes overhead." [p. 11, The Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact, Pacific Northwest Electronic Warfare Range]

An average sound pressure level of 85 dBA, according to World Health Organization standards, is 50 dBA above safe levels which represents more than 32,000 times the acoustic energy of the natural baselines of these areas.

OPA contends the number of flights of jet formations from 2-4 planes, at altitudes listed above, will create noise that surpasses that allowed during the times of the year when logging operations must cease because of restrictions needed by endangered species in the area.

Further, OPA questions the conclusions made from the Biological Opinion of July 2016 because the species studied were limited to endangered species in the areas in question. One of the purposes for creating Olympic National Park was to protect the Peninsula's Roosevelt elk. These same elk migrate into Olympic National Forest. If noise can damage the human species, it should be assumed unless proven otherwise that, it will also do similar damage to the mega-fauna of the Peninsula. Another environmental question not answered. OPA considers this another violation of NEPA because it is ignoring wildlife valuable to ONP and ONF.

LACK OF TRANSPARENCY, INACCESSIBLE INFORMATION, & INSUFFICIENT RESPONSES

The timing of the Nov 29, 2016 announcement appears, unfortunately, to reduce transparency and ability of citizen involvement in this issue. After delaying the decision for two years, and then including the Christian-Judean holidays within the comment period is a further example of the Forest Service's apparent attempt to reduce citizen input.

In addition, links given in District Ranger Millett's letter announcing his decision became inoperative resulting in documents being unavailable. It required a call to the USFS Washington, DC office to obtain another link to the documents. The link provided in Millett's letter did not provide linkage to the operative link, to my knowledge, from 12-20-2016 for, at least, several days following phone and email objections to the situation. The same happened with the Draft EA in Oct 2014 as noted in our comments at that time. OPA argues this violates NEPA procedures for allowing public input to the process. At best, this shows incompetence, otherwise, a conspiracy to reduce public input to the process as required by NEPA.

There were insufficient responses given in Appendix B. There were simplistic reasons and a failure to accept responsibility for the Olympic Peninsula's environment beyond allowing trucks to travel and park on the roads of Olympic National Forest until they create ruts deeper than two inches.

For Example:

Concern Seq#35: Question: The USFS should deny the permit because it conflicts with NPS purposes. USFS reply says that no ONP land is involved therefore the question is irrelevant. In the same response it says there will be no increase in the number of flights. The Draft EA gave no information about the number of flights. Does that mean there will be no increase of no flights? OPA thinks not. It is an illogical attempt to use both ends of a bogus position.

Concern Seq#48: The USFS response claims that “electronic warfare training in this airspace is ongoing and has been conducted by the Navy in this area for over 40 years.” OPA would ask why then is a permit needed now? Does the need for a permit indicate that there will be changes to the activity? Will the intensity of the activity be going up?

The answer is:

“To sustain and enhance the level and type of EW training currently being conducted as described in the 2010 NWTRC EIS/OEIS and authorized in its Record of Decision. “

“To provide the ability to accommodate growth in future training requirements and to maximize the ability of local units to achieve their training requirements on local ranges.

“My decision accommodates anticipated future training requirements by expanding the current use and activity of the long-established Military Operations Areas in and around the Olympic Peninsula.” [p. 5, The Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact, Pacific Northwest Electronic Warfare Range]

” Noise pollution adversely affects the lives of millions of people. Studies have shown that there are direct links between noise and health. Problems related to noise include stress related illnesses, high blood pressure, speech interference, hearing loss, sleep disruption, and lost productivity. Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) is the most common and often discussed health effect, but research has shown that exposure to constant or high levels of noise can cause countless adverse health affects.” [EPA website, downloaded January 11, 2017]

Further, while EPA has been reporting that noise pollution is a significant adverse factor in human health, the Navy has responded with “factual” responses that do not reflect the realities of their activities on the Peninsula. Their decibel reporting appears to be unrealistic and not plausible with the reported activities in which they will engage.

Also the decibels quoted in Navy studies are flawed as to the baseline used, as mentioned above.

The Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact, Pacific Northwest Electronic Warfare Range did not sufficiently answer or explain the items listed in OPA’s comments in Oct and Nov of 2014.

1. IMPACT ON PEOPLE & ECONOMY

In 2014, the visitation to Olympic National Park, had increased to 3,243,873 and the value of this visitation has increased to \$365,559,900. Olympic National Park is currently the 6th most visited national park. These values do not include visitors to the Peninsula that do not visit the National Park. Forbes chose to include the Hoh Valley in its Top Ten Coolest Places to Visit in 2017 for reasons of experiencing natural quiet and Evergreen Escapes, a major worldwide provider of ecotours based in Seattle, is gearing up for weekly Quiet Tours to the Hoh Rain Forest. To ignore the noise resulting from the Navy’s intense air operations and therefore state these activities will not affect visitation to the Peninsula is an irresponsible position to take. 8-16 hours of jet fighters looking for emitter trucks can only result in a reduction in quality of life and a reduction of tourism on the Peninsula.

The project data has not shown it will add any significant revenue to the economy of the western part of the Olympic Peninsula.

The USFS’s insistence on conveniently dividing its responsibilities from the Navy’s actions ignores the impact of the project on the Peninsula.

2. OPERATION NOISE

“Noise²

The 2014 EW Range EA addresses the potential impacts of noise on the human terrestrial environment in the vicinity of the EW range in Washington from the sound generated by the selected alternative on noise-sensitive areas (2014 EW Range EA, pp. 3.3-3 through 3.3-8). Noise

sensitive areas are those areas where noise interferes with normal activities associated with its use (2014 EW Range EA, pg. 3.3-3). Noise-sensitive areas may include such sites in the immediate vicinity of operations, pursuant to the Noise Control Act of 1972 (49 USC 44715). Users of designated recreational areas are considered sensitive receptors (2014 EW Range EA, pg. 3.3-3). Potential impacts of sound on terrestrial biological resources are addressed in Section 3.2 of the 2014 EW Range EA, and summarized in this document under the Biological Resources section (below).

“Noise from mobile transmitter vehicles and generators will only occur on established NFS roads within the Olympic National Forest. Existing noise levels in the project area are influenced by traffic on Highway 101 and local roads, adjacent transmission lines, local industries and other noise-generating activities. Ambient sounds levels vary by location in forested areas and is expected to range between 30 and 50 dBA on the Olympic Peninsula (2014 EW Range EA, pg. 3.3-4). The contribution of the intermittent transits by the mobile emitter vehicles to the overall noise environment will be no more than incremental and will not be considered a substantial source of sound. Generators selected to power the mobile emitters have specifications that state that they meet National Park Service sound level requirements (60dBA at 50 ft.) (2014 EW Range EA, pg. 3.3-6). Noise from the generators used to power the emitters will create a steady noise during the periods of operation. The sound level at 50 ft. (15.3 m) is estimated at or near ambient noise levels and the sound level at 100 ft. (30.5 m) is estimated to be below the expected ambient noise level. Sound impacts to community noise levels from training activities under Alternative 1 are negligible in areas outside the immediate vicinity of operations because the areas occur on NFS lands and very few members of the public would be exposed to sound from the mobile emitter sites. Overall, no impacts on the acoustic environment would occur under modified Alternative 1 as a result of operations noise.” [p. 11, DRAFT, Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact, Pacific Northwest Electronic Warfare Range, USDA Forest Service, Pacific Ranger District, Olympic National Forest]

The statement above is true, IF all would ignore the sound of the jets flying search patterns trying to find the mobile transmitters scattered about the west side of the Olympic Peninsula. The Forest Service proceeds to erase its ignorance with the following footnote 2”

“2 Aircraft use associated with EW training over the Olympic Military Operations Areas was addressed in the 2010 NWTRC EIS/OEIS (Navy, 2010) and reanalyzed in the Navy’s 2015 Northwest Training and Testing Final EIS/OEIS (Navy, 2015) which includes an airspace noise analysis for the Olympic Military Operations Areas. The 2015 Northwest Training and Testing EIS (p. 3.0-37) notes that: “Based on the results of that study, sound exposure levels at the sea surface or on land from most air combat maneuver overflights are **expected to be less than 85 dBA** (based on an EA-18G aircraft flying at an altitude of 5,000 ft. [1,524 m] and at a subsonic airspeed [400 knots]). Exposure to fixed-wing aircraft noise would be brief (seconds) as an aircraft quickly passes overhead.” [Footnote, p.11, DRAFT, Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact, Pacific Northwest Electronic Warfare Range, USDA Forest Service, Pacific Ranger District, Olympic National Forest] .

There are a myriad of colloquiums that explain this presentation like, “trying to have your cake and eat it too.”

Despite being brought to the USFS attention in the OPA Draft EA comments, there has been no study done to evaluate the effects on the Peninsula of the Navy activities that will result under this permit. The following was found in the web page Wikipedia, under Aircraft Noise.

“There are health consequences of elevated sound levels. Elevated workplace or other noise can cause hearing impairment, hypertension, ischemic heart disease, annoyance, sleep disturbance, and decreased school performance. Although some hearing loss occurs naturally with age,^[2] in many developed nations the impact of noise is sufficient to impair hearing over the course of a lifetime.^{[3][4]} Elevated noise levels can create stress, increase workplace accident rates, and stimulate aggression and other anti-social behaviors.^[5]

“German environmental study

A large-scale statistical analysis of the health effects of aircraft noise was undertaken in the late 2000s by Bernhard Greiser for the Umweltbundesamt, Germany's central environmental office. The health data of over one million residents around the Cologne airport were analyzed for health effects correlating with aircraft noise. The results were then corrected for other noise influences in the residential areas, and for socioeconomic factors, to reduce possible skewing of the data.^[6]

The German study concluded that aircraft noise clearly and significantly impairs health.^[6] For example, a day-time average sound pressure level of 60 decibel increasing coronary heart disease by 61% in men and 80% in women. As another indicator, a night-time average sound pressure level of 55 decibel increased the risk of heart attacks by 66% in men and 139% in women. Statistically significant health effects did however start as early as from an average sound pressure level of 40 decibel.^[6]

“FAA advice

The FAA says that a maximum day-night average sound level of 65 dB is incompatible with residential communities.^[7] Communities in affected areas may eligible for mitigation such as soundproofing.

“Cognitive effects

Simulated aircraft noise at 65 dB(A) has been shown to negatively affect individuals' memory and recall of auditory information.^[10] In one study comparing the effect of aircraft noise to the effect of alcohol on cognitive performance, it was found that simulated aircraft noise at 65 dB(A) had the same effect on individuals' ability to recall auditory information as being intoxicated with a Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) level of at 0.10.^[11] A BAC of 0.10 is double the legal limit required to operate a motor vehicle in many developed countries such as Australia.

2. Rosenhall U, Pedersen K, Svanborg A (1990). "Presbycusis and noise-induced hearing loss". *Ear Hear.* **11** (4): 257–63.
3. Schmid, RE (2007-02-18). "[Aging nation faces growing hearing loss](#)". *CBS News*. Archived from [the original](#) on November 15, 2007. Retrieved 2007-02-18
4. Senate Public Works Committee, [Noise Pollution and Abatement Act](#) of 1972, S. Rep. No. 1160, 92nd Cong. 2nd session
6. *Tödlicher Lärm - Spiegel*, Nr. 51, 14 Dezember 2009, Page 45 (German)
7. "[Noise Monitoring](#)". *Massport*. Retrieved 31 January 2014.
8. Ozcan HK, Nemlioglu S. In-cabin noise levels during commercial aircraft flights. *Can Acoust* 2006;34:31-5.
9. Standards Australia, AS/NZS 2107. Acoustics-Recommended Design Sound Levels and Reverberation Times for Building Interiors. AUS: Standards Australia, Sydney; 2000

10. Molesworth BR, Burgess M. (2013). Improving intelligibility at a safety critical point: In flight cabin safety. *Safety Science*, 51, 11-16.
11. Molesworth BR, Burgess M, Gunnell B. (2013). Using the effect of alcohol as a comparison to illustrate the detrimental effects of noise on performance. *Noise & Health*, 15, 367-373."

According to these studies, harm to humans can start at 40 decibels. Other studies show cardiac harm at 55 to 65 decibels.

OPA doubts the accuracy of the decibels reported given that the project will use from 1-4 planes, flying at a time, during these training activities. Congressman Derick Kilmer called for sound monitoring tests to be run. To date the Navy and the Forest Service have ignored the Congressman's request.

3. POLLUTION CAUSED

"Clean Air Act (CAA)

The CAA is the comprehensive federal law that regulates air emissions from stationary and mobile sources. This decision will not conflict with attainment and maintenance goals established in State Implementation Plan. A CAA conformity determination will not be required because emissions attributable to the alternatives including the modified Alternative 1 will be below *de minimis* thresholds." [p. 21, DRAFT, Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact, Pacific Northwest Electronic Warfare Range, USDA Forest Service, Pacific Ranger District, Olympic National Forest]

This statement is incomplete and misleading because it does not include the results of the jet aircraft pollution that will be brought to this area. Some of this pollution will reach the land and habitat of Olympic National Forest under the control of the Olympic National Forest. The rest will fall on the other public and private land and waters of the Peninsula. Again a refusal by the Forest Service and the Navy to acknowledge the reality of the pilot training on the Peninsula environment. OPA considers this to be a violation of NEPA because it does not disclose the environmental damage that would be caused as a result of issuing the permit.

As stated in OPA's Draft Comments submitted in 2014, "OPA cannot find any reporting on the effects of air pollution that would be created by aircraft, flying up to 12 hours a day and up to 260 days a year, to the people or the environment of the area of the training maneuvers. This seems to be a significant omission and violates NEPA." Another question unanswered in the November 29, 2016 Draft Decision.

4. WILDLIFE CONCERNS

OPA considers wildlife concerns have not been adequately studied even for endangered species because of deceptive decibel reports. There is no study that has replicated the effects of the intensive flight patterns that will occur under this permit, if issued. This is inadequate to determine the environmental effects of this project on the wildlife of the Olympic National Forest or the west side of the Olympic Peninsula impacted by the training flights.

Because of the noise and air pollution caused by the jet flights which OPA learned about in the July 2016 USFWS Biological Opinion, OPA is now concerned about the effect on the Washington Islands Refuges, "Specifically, the problems, concerns, and opportunities for the Washington Islands Refuges include: (1) a lack of public awareness of the Refuges' valuable and sensitive wildlife resources; (2) the need to improve coordination with other managing agencies and Tribes; (3) wildlife disturbances from aircraft overflights and people on or near breeding sites; (4) the need for additional scientific research, surveys, and monitoring; (5) the existing occurrence and potential threat of contaminants and debris; and (6)

concerns related to exotic species.” [p. 1-3 Washington Islands National Wildlife Refuges, Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, 2007.]

The Washington Islands Refuges already suffer from aircraft overflight. What will be the effect of the flights on the Refuges? What will be the effect of noise and air pollution on the elk in the ONP and ONF? How will these flights effect the bird migrations on the Pacific Flyway?

These questions have not been answered. Furthermore, not one bioacoustician, the only scientist capable of assessing noise impacts on wildlife was consulted in the preparation of the Navy’s EA or by the USFS in arriving at its Draft Decision. OPA argues this lack of study violates NEPA because it makes an inadequate attempt to determine the effects of the Navy’s activities upon the wildlife on the Peninsula.

5. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

These training activities have been operating, according to the Draft Decision, for 40 years.

To sustain and enhance the level and type of EW training currently being conducted as described in the 2010 NWTRC EIS/OEIS and authorized in its Record of Decision.

Under the No Action Alternative, limited EW training, without the enhanced capability of fixed and mobile emitters, would continue to be conducted in the NWTRC and intermediate-level EW training for certification would continue to occur at the Mountain Home Air Force Base approximately 400 nautical miles southeast of the Naval Air Station Whidbey Island. I did not select this alternative because it does not reasonably address the project’s purpose and need by foregoing the opportunity to sustain, enhance, expand, and accommodate for growth of EW training on lands within my jurisdiction. [p. 5, DRAFT, Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact, Pacific Northwest Electronic Warfare Range, USDA Forest Service, Pacific Ranger District, Olympic National Forest]

The highlighted comment by the USFS gives the reasons for alternative 1 choice based on the Navy applicant’s purpose and need but in other statements absolves itself from the consequences of the project. As stated in the comment, the activity the Navy wishes to transfer to the Olympic Peninsula has been, and is being, done at Mountain Home Air Force Base.

6. NAVY EA ELIMINATIONS FROM CONSIDERATION

The Navy EA states, “Certain resource areas were eliminated from detailed study in the EA because research revealed that the Proposed Action is unlikely to have any potential environmental impacts on these resources, or that impacts would be negligible. The resources that were not evaluated in this EA included geology, water, land use, cultural, transportation, socioeconomics, and environmental justice and protection of children.” [Executive Summary ES-2 SUMMARY OF IMPACTS]

OPA argues that the purpose of NEPA is to evaluate the project and provide proof that NEPA concerns are met. The applicant cannot make that decision by arbitrarily excluding a resource area. It is not for the Navy or Forest Service to make the subjective decision to exclude NEPA concerns. OPA considers the following deletions from consideration as violations of NEPA.

Further, as stated in OPA’s comments in Oct & Nov of 2014, “The Navy EA states, ‘Certain resource areas were eliminated from detailed study in the EA because research revealed that the Proposed Action is unlikely to have any potential environmental impacts on these resources, or that impacts would be negligible. The resources that were not evaluated in this EA included geology, water, land use, cultural, transportation, socioeconomics, and environmental justice and protection of children.’ [Executive Summary ES-2 SUMMARY OF IMPACTS]

It is not for the Navy or Forest Service to make the subjective decision to exclude basic NEPA concerns. OPA argues this violates NEPA.

The Navy EA has continued to exclude the following important discussions:

- The Navy has used socioeconomic reasons for the purpose of this permit but has not provided cost comparisons of the permit activities on the environment verses their claimed cost savings.
- The Navy has excluded discussion of land use of the permit activities verses the current use of the Forest Service lands.
- The Navy has removed cultural factors from the permit applications despite the fact that several tribal lands could be affected by the permit activities. Cultural also applies to traditional uses of an area by all people. All people living, working, and touring in the area will be impacted by these activities.
- Protection of children was eliminated. Children are people and all people in the area of the training range will be affected by the activities governed by the permit. As noted under OPERATION NOISE, noise creates “decreased school performance.”

7. DEGRADATION TO PENINSULA WILDERNESS

The activities that would come to the Olympic Peninsula as a result of the establishment of this training warfare range violates the purpose of The Wilderness Act of 1964 by invading the wilderness character of Olympic National Park with noise pollution. 95% of Olympic National Park is designated wilderness. Airplane noise generated over, just outside of the park, or the National Forest Wilderness Areas cannot be stopped at their border and therefore destroys the wilderness character.

“A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.” [Wilderness Act 1964]

The sound of freedom should not shatter the solitude of our wilderness, parks, and private lands because it will make our lives more anxious and terrifying. Our people need the refuge of quiet places. Places to escape from the noise of civilization where we can think, dream, and recreate. This project violates the spirit, and therefore, the Wilderness Act of 1964. It violates NEPA because it creates, with the noise pollution, harm to the humans, animals, and birds of the Olympic Peninsula.

Because this training is currently being done in Idaho, it will not harm our national defense to remain where it is. It will create a precedence for using the airspace over national parks, refuges, and wilderness areas thereby reducing their value as refuges for humans and wildlife as designated by Congress.

Olympic Park Associates argues that the stated purpose of this permit does not compare to the damage to the human and wildlife values of the Olympic Peninsula. The value to the people of the United States is far better served by not transferring the warfare training range to the Olympic Peninsula. As proposed it would cause significant economic and environmental harm to the people living on the Peninsula, and the many tourists that visit this area every year. Because this is federal land set aside for the benefit of all United States citizens, this proposal degrades those benefits to all citizens.

Based on the information or the lack thereof, this permit will damage many members of Olympic Park Associates by removing the quiet and tranquility our members have had and should have going to Olympic National Park, Olympic National Forest, and the surrounding lands on the Olympic Peninsula. Further, OPA members have used the Olympic National Forest roads and trails to recreate.

Olympic Park Associates asks that the United States Forest Service not issue this permit to the Navy. At minimum, a full EIS is needed before this project proceeds any further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donna Osseward". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

Donna Osseward, President,
Olympic Park Associates,
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Seattle, WA 98125
206-949-7020