

February 18, 2015

Mr. Ray Mabus, Secretary of the Navy
Office of the Secretary of the Navy
1000 Navy Pentagon, Room 4D652
Washington, DC 20350

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We, the Citizens of Ebey's Reserve, wish to bring a matter of utmost importance to your personal attention. It concerns U.S. naval operations that are harming U.S. civilians - the very people the Navy is sworn to protect. At issue are flight operations at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island (NASWI) that are undermining the Navy's credibility and public support. We are writing you directly because we are not confident that those who serve under your command have made you fully aware of this situation and the potential consequences to the Navy and the country.

At issue is the Navy's current and planned use of populated and environmentally sensitive areas of Washington's Puget Sound and Olympic Peninsula areas for EA-18G 'Growler' operations. The harmful impacts of current and planned operations contribute to the growing public perception that the Navy is out-of-touch and out-of-control.

As citizens who live and work in and around Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve (Ebey's Reserve), a National Park and an important wildlife and migratory bird habitat, we first came together to protest the destructive use of NASWI's Coupeville Outlying Field (OLF). This short, antiquated World War II runway is situated directly alongside Ebey's Reserve and within three miles of the Town of Coupeville, the county hospital, recycling and transit centers, three schools with over 800 children, 400 homes in Admirals Cove, and numerous other residences and businesses. Today, the increasingly destructive impacts from NASWI's Growler operations are now generating complaints from throughout the Puget Sound region, and according to recent news reports, from as far away as Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.

We would encourage you to visit citizensofebeysreserve.com to understand these impacts. Homes, schools, and recreational areas are saturated with aircraft noise well over the levels known to cause health problems. These levels exceed standards established by the EPA, the US Noise Control Act of 1972, and the World Health Organization.

The Navy is exposing unprotected civilians to well-documented levels of noise that require double hearing protection for naval personnel. Despite its protestations, the Navy knows it is causing harm (it has previously compensated residents who sued over jet noise associated with operations at the OLF).

An Environmental Impact Study (EIS) on Growler operations has never been completed. Yet Growlers are flying low level operations over communities and environmentally sensitive areas throughout the Puget Sound region. An EIS, which will not be completed until 2017 at the earliest, was only started

after Citizens of the Ebey's Reserve (COER) took the Navy to court long after the Navy's harmful impacts had begun.

In 2012 actual operations at the OLF exceeded the limits stated in the Navy's 2005 Environmental Assessment by 60%. The number of operations at the OLF was supposed to be limited to 6,120 a year by 2013. Instead, operations numbered 9,378 in 2011 and 9,668 in 2012. There were 5,688 operations in the first five months of 2013 when operations were halted at the OLF after COER took the Navy to court.

The Navy admits that 98% of the 'acoustic energy' coming from NASWI comes from Growler operations. The Navy is now receiving noise complaints from throughout the Puget Sound region not just the area around the OLF. Warnings of Navy Jet Noise posted at Washington's most often visited state park, Deception Pass State Park, make clear the growing threat to area tourism and our quality of life.

The Navy's claim that the OLF is 'essential' is not believable. After being sued for NEPA violations the Navy didn't use the OLF for almost a year. Growler pilot training did not stop. It continued elsewhere, proving the Navy has other, better options.

As citizens, spending our time, energy, and money opposing harmful naval operations is not what any of us envisioned. However, we are resolved to do what is necessary to defend our homes and families. Our 'mission' is to preserve our right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness and to hold our government accountable.

'Our panel of speakers will continue with educational presentations to communities and Tribal nations whose areas are currently impacted by naval operations, and those whose areas are targeted for operations (such as the warfare training planned over the Olympic National Forest).

We will continue to build alliances and coalitions of environmental, health, and public interest organizations. We now know that our problems are not unique and are encouraged by the willingness of other impacted communities to come together to address what is clearly both a regional and national problem. See the following web sites for examples:

northwestactionalliance.org

washingtonenvironmentalprotectioncoalition.org

quietskies.info

We will promote and commence litigation against the U.S Navy, organize community protests and demonstrations, and in general do whatever is legal and possible to reveal and deter the destructive activities associated with the Navy's expansion in the Pacific Northwest.

We will encourage the public to communicate their concerns to elected officials, especially those who direct our tax dollars to naval operations that harm us. We will hold those elected officials accountable and keep the public informed about the true economic and health costs to taxpayers.

In all cases we will tell the truth about our experiences with the Navy at NASWI and the OLF. Ours is a lesson to others that says the Navy's NEPA process will not ensure protection of people or the

environment. Our experience makes it clear that the Navy cannot be trusted to regulate itself and that it is willing to harm the very people and environment it is sworn to protect.

You should understand that the Navy's actions here on Whidbey Island, and at the OLF in particular, are not only harming us, they are harming the Navy itself. Many people, including several high-ranking officials we met with during our visit to the nation's capital, believe that the Navy's relationship with our elected officials has become one of the tail wagging the dog. This is not how our democracy is supposed to work.

With every ear splitting and window rattling flight over a home, school, or environmentally sensitive area, the Navy loses credibility and public support. When the Navy's 'mission' results in American citizens becoming collateral damage, it is inevitable that support for the mission is undermined.

We want you to understand that we are not against all things Navy. Many of us have served in the military or have friends or family who currently serve. Although our lifestyles, backgrounds and political views vary, we are all loyal American citizens. We are responsible taxpayers who take our civic obligations seriously. Attempts to mischaracterize us as un-American or unpatriotic are wrong, unfair and not well received. We love our country and want to protect it for the generations to come.

Your attention to this matter would be appreciated.

Sincerely,

Citizens of Ebey's Reserve Board of Directors:

Michael Monson

Ken Pickard

Paula Spina

Tom Ewell

Cate Andrews

Maryon Attwood

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Copies to:

President Barack Obama

Armed Services Committee Members

Washington Congressional Delegation

Governor Jay Inslee, Washington State

Rachel Maddow, Rachel Maddow Show

Amy Goodman, Democracy Now