



# Quietskies

## Over San Juan County

**Update: February 18, 2018**

### **ACTION ALERT:**

We have yet another ACTION REQUEST:

\*\*\* Please call or write to our congressional delegation now. Ask them to tell the Navy to extend the comment period for the Environmental Assessment (EA) on Naval Special Operations Training in Western Washington State, for another 30 days.

#### **WHAT IS THIS ABOUT?**

##### **NAVY SEALS PRACTICE COMBAT IN STATE PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACES:**

The Navy has opened for comment an Environmental Assessment (EA) for Special Operations in which Navy SEALs stage covert small team landings via mini subs and small boats, with up to 20 personnel concealing themselves ashore for up to 72 hours, plus mock gun battles with realistic weapons shooting paintballs, called "direct actions".

Although the Navy owns 46 miles of shoreline and over 151,000 acres of land in the Pacific Northwest, this combat training will occur in communities, boat marinas, 65+ state parks, public beaches, and on some private lands in Puget Sound and on the outer coast.

The EA COMMENT PERIOD CLOSES Wednesday February 21, 2018.

CONTACT INFORMATION and suggested comments(attached) are at the end of this email.

THIS COMBAT TRAINING IS NOT HAPPENING IN SAN JUAN COUNTY - YET.

-----  
NAVY OPEN HOUSE MEETINGS have been held in the affected areas on Whidbey Island and on the Olympic Peninsula.

HERE ARE COMMENTS FROM THE NAVY AT THE OPEN HOUSE MEETINGS:

\* I wish I could say we are making this up, but we're not. At last week's open house, Navy representatives said some shocking things, including the fact that the public will not be shown boundaries or shut out when the Navy is conducting an exercise on public or private lands, "so you may wander unawares into a secret military exercise, uninformed that by doing so, you are a participant."

\* Another Navy representative said, "the point is to be able to watch and track whoever comes through - you, the public, the enemy, without your awareness, whether you're walking, fishing, enjoying nature, or otherwise going about your business." He suggested that people should not be doing anything in the woods for which privacy might be needed, because - "we might be watching you."

\* A third confirmed that the public is to be the proxy for the enemy. He said, "That's the point, for the military to take down enemies without being detected. If the public detects us, then we've failed in what we're trying to do." He then assured listeners that the Navy would use "environmentally friendly gentle fake bullets."

Introducing anxiety and intimidation into ordinary civilian outdoor activities on public or private lands does not represent a healthy relationship between the Navy and surrounding communities. The absence of discussion in the Draft EA, and the absence of any sensitivity on the Navy's part at the open houses, on how people might feel about being used

as practice enemies for the military with neither their knowledge nor consent, to be watched at any time or any place by armed military combatants along more than 265 miles of Puget Sound coast, is as stunning in scope as is the proposal itself.

The above comments are provided by the West Coast Action Alliance. FOR MAPS OF THE PROPOSED COMBAT TRAINING and the Navy EA: (<http://westcoastactionalliance.org/>)

-----  
HERE'S WHAT IS NEEDED - NOW:

First we need to ask for a 30 day extension to the Environmental Assessment (EA) : The EA COMMENT PERIOD CLOSES Wednesday February 21, 2018.

CALL:

-----  
CONGRESSMAN RICK LARSEN: (202) 225-2605.

MARIA CANTWELL: 202-224-3441

SENATOR PATTY MURRAY: 202-224-2621

GOVERNOR JAY INSLEE: 390-902-4111.

-----  
You can also email them via comment boxes on their web sites.

WRITE:

-----  
Larsen: <https://larsen.house.gov/contact-rick/email-rick>

Cantwell: <http://www.cantwell.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/email-maria>

Murray: <http://www.murray.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/contactme>

ALSO, PLEASE EMAIL YOUR REQUEST FOR AN EXTENSION AND YOUR COMMENTS TO:

nwnepa@navy.mil

THE MESSAGE to legislators:

\*I am asking you to please tell the US Navy to extend the comment period for the Environmental Assessment on Naval Special Operations Training in Western Washington State for 30 days.

The public is just learning about its existence, and due to the fact that communities and private landowners along more than 265 miles of shoreline in Puget Sound will be potentially affected, a comment period that ends next week, on February 21, is insufficient.

Thank you for your assistance. \*

TO SEND COMMENTS: See sample cut and paste COMMENTS ATTACHED below.

Even though this is not directly affecting San Juan County - it could in the future.

The Navy and our legislators need to hear from all of us in the region. They need to understand that we will resist the Navy War Training Zone expansion - and we do require that the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) process be followed.

SAMPLE COMMENTS ARE BELOW.

You may submit comments by e-mail to [nwnepa@navy.mil](mailto:nwnepa@navy.mil)

or by US mail to:

Naval Facilities Engineering Command Northwest  
Attention: Project Manager, EV21.AW  
1101 Tautog Circle, Suite 203

## Silverdale, WA 98315-1101

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Navy's "Special Operations Training in Western Washington" Environmental Assessment (EA). My first request is to extend the current comment period by 30 days, because the affected public is not being given enough time to understand and evaluate potential impacts of the Navy's proposed action. But my main request is that the Navy cease and desist with this training in state parks and on private property.

I object to the Navy's use of private lands and state parks for covert combat training for the following 10 reasons:

1. Parks are not intended for military training. The military use of state parks is at odds with Washington state law. For example:

a.) WAC 352-37-095, "Disturbances," specifically prohibits any conduct which "...impedes or disturbs the general public in the use and enjoyment of state park areas..." Navy personnel have stated that a safety officer will survey the park for users and ask them their intention so that the Navy can "train around them." Most people who are told that a combat training activity is going on "around them" will certainly be disturbed.

b.) WAC 352-37-230, "Firearms," specifically prohibits discharging of a firearm "except for good cause authorized by the commission." The possession, display, carrying, discharge or use of a firearm is regulated under 9.41 of RCW. The Navy's use of firearms - 'simulated' or not - is not in keeping with the peaceful nature intended in Recreational Parks.

c.) WAC 352-32-010, "Intimidate," prohibits engaging in conduct in state parks "...that would make a reasonable person fearful." Based on remarks by Navy personnel at recent open houses who said civilians might wander unawares into a secret military exercise, uninformed that by doing so they become participants, and going so far as to suggest that people should no longer have any expectations of privacy in the woods because the Navy might be watching, this Draft EA is so egregious in its deliberate introduction of anxiety into what were once normal outdoor activities that it should be withdrawn.

2. Protection of children insufficient: Despite legal requirements set out by WAC 352-32-010 and by Presidential Executive Order 13045, "Protection of Children from Environmental Health and Safety Risks," the Draft EA dismisses in one brief sentence any potential effects on children who may witness training events that include "direct action" mock gun battles by military members in full combat gear. It fails to recognize that children are especially prone to being frightened by realistic violence, and that they do not have the maturity to self-regulate or cope with trauma.

3. Military Bases need to be used first: The Navy makes a big deal about needing the strong currents and cold water of Puget Sound. The Navy already HAS 46 miles of coastline and 151,000 acres of land in this region; plenty at Bremerton, Kitsap and Whidbey Naval Air Station (on both sides of the island). And there are plenty of people in those military bases and surrounding communities who love interacting with the Navy. Now the Navy has chosen more than 265 additional miles of shoreline, much of it private property, but it has not demonstrated why existing locations with willing participants are inadequate. No training can be perfect - the divers aren't going to be shot at with real bullets. So what's the big deal about needing "more realistic" training? This training in and around communities who object to it amounts to an unprecedented military taking of public lands and privacy protections, by the use of intimidation; it should be conducted on the lands that are already owned by the Department of Defense; that's why the public set them aside. Normalizing military training into the lives of civilians regardless of their objections because it is "convenient" for the Navy displays a stunning level of contempt for these communities.

4. Failure to assess impacts to communities, the environment, and to our economies. The Draft EA fails to accurately disclose how many military personnel in total will actually be training or serving as support crews, and thus fails to predict or assess the level of impacts to multiple "secret" sites along the 265 additional miles of shoreline the Navy has selected. It fails to address the economic impacts to a vibrant tourism industry that will not react favorably, and it fails to address potential impacts on property values associated with, or adjacent to, the training. For example, in the event a property owner discovers that a "real estate agreement" exists between his/her neighbor and the Navy, is that property owner obliged to disclose that fact to potential buyers? What are the legal ramifications if a buyer backs out of a sale due to the existence of combat training on an adjacent property, or if the value of a property near one that hosts this training declines? Most of these exercises will happen at night. Trainees are trainees, so what if they make a mistake and invade the wrong beach or property? One with sensitive nesting habitat, or especially, one with young children who are easily traumatized?

5. Failure to disclose hazards to civilians: According to Navy materials, "building clearing" direct actions are slated to take place on both private property and in state parks. A Navy representative said "gentle" fake bullets will be used, which we assume means paintballs. The Draft EA does not address what happens when realistic-looking weapons are fired and

civilians who are unaware of the exercise get caught in the crossfire. How will the paintballs feel if someone without protective clothing gets hit? Does the Navy pay for medical care and counseling for PTSD? What happens when an innocent bystander gets injured? Are “hostages” used in these exercises? What if trainees get discovered by someone with a real gun? And what if a gun battle ensues with real bullets? Who is legally responsible? If this happens in a state park, who gets sued, Parks or the Navy, or both? How has the Navy apprised the community of people who hunt?

6. Biological, cultural and historic impacts not analyzed: The Draft EA fails to evaluate the effects of sonar use by mini-submarines and other disturbances in the sensitive shallow-water ecosystems that support hundreds of species of birds, fish, crabs and other animals and plants. It dismisses impacts of repeated trampling in shallow waters, beaches and upland areas where birds may be nesting, and erosion of cliffs from climbing. Its analysis of cumulative impacts to Tribal, cultural and historic sites that may be impacted is one paragraph long and completely inadequate.

7. Marine Navigation Hazards not addressed: The Navy has said it will train divers to get on shore undetected. That means they'll not have any dive lights or other devices to make them visible to others in or on the water. And since the Navy has said that the area won't be roped off or restricted, kayaks, sailboats and other craft that use those waters could collide with a Navy vessel. Given the recent track record of Navy ships running into other ships and causing great damage, how can we expect this won't happen here?

8. Drones, robotic surveillance technology not disclosed: It fails to mention or analyze the advanced technologies that will be used for military surveillance and communication inside our communities and state parks during these secret operations, which include unmanned underwater and aerial drones, and robotic devices. It ignores completely the privacy concerns of any passersby with electronic devices such as smart phones, who may be unaware they are being surveilled, tracked, and possibly recorded. It throws into question our Fourth Amendment protections.

9. Missing check list: During the open houses, a Navy trainer said areas would be assessed prior to any training deployment. However, no such check list or procedure is in the EA. How will the Navy know which birds are nesting where? Will they call Fish and Wildlife? The Audubon Society? No one was able to answer the question of how the sites are chosen with respect to doing no harm to wildlife and habitat. All we were told was, "Trust us." Where is the checklist? Who will be contacted to know what areas are sensitive at training time? This smacks of "just give us permission and we'll be careful." Given that the military is driven by procedures and rules, where are the rules and procedures for site selection? How will the appropriate officials be notified PRIOR to training at a given site? Who is keeping track of which sites have been used how many times? The Navy has been very consistent in NOT disclosing information like this when there is no reason to keep it secret. Citizens and public officials alike have a right to know what is happening and where. The Navy is not above the law.

10. Using unwitting and unwilling passersby as proxies for “enemies” on which military trainees can practice their tracking skills is a most reprehensible form of bullying. This training intimidates those who have been accustomed to enjoying outdoor activities, and is an example of the unhealthy relationships and declining levels of trust that exist between the Navy and its neighboring communities. State parks and private property are not a military playground, and the people who live and recreate there are not military playthings. Therefore, I ask that this Draft EA be withdrawn.