



Quietskies

Over San Juan County

Update: July 16, 2018

GREETINGS:

U.S. Rep. Rick Larsen (D-2nd District) sent a letter to the Secretary of the Navy on July 6 regarding the Navy's preferred alternative in the EIS regarding Growler operation at NAS Whidbey Island. This letter is posted at: <https://medium.com/@RickLarsen/calling-on-the-navy-to-address-jet-noise-fdd29774f68e>

Larsen's letter has all the earmarks of an election year action (he did something similar in 2016) to appear to be working to reduce the impact of the Navy training. It is worthwhile to note that his comments now lack similar substance. His tough commitment is to asking questions instead of demanding meaningful action. The following "questions" have been developed in response to Rep. Larsen's letter to the Navy. These questions have been developed by a regional Growler Group Alliance member.

LARSEN WROTE:

"1. The FEIS will recommend conducting 80 percent of FCLPs at the OLF. This is a significant departure from the historical distribution. Only twice in the past 40 years have more than 50 percent of FCLPs been conducted at the OLF. While I understand Ault Field is a full-use facility, and the OLF can only support FCLPs, this is still a dramatic change to operations. Why were the other scenarios with a less extreme distribution rejected?"

COMMENT: NOT ADDRESSED IN THIS QUESTION:

The Navy has already said that they picked the option with the least overall impact. What was not asked: Why were not other, more remote airfields considered for "least overall impact?"

Since the DEIS made zero attempt to assess the overall impact (health, economy, environment costs, public-supported infrastructure, etc.) the overall impact is not known, so how can the Navy know which is the least impact? Considering training at other locations was not assessed even in the rudimentary assessment the Navy used in the DEIS.

LARSEN WROTE:

"2. Under Scenario 2A, the total number of Growlers at NASWI will increase by 44 percent, but the total number of FCLPs will increase by 287 percent. What accounts for this disproportionate impact, and is equitability a factor in determining a preferred alternative? "

COMMENT: WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS QUESTION? The answer is in the arithmetic of the 80/20 Flight Operations and Ault Field being "full" forcing the rest of the FCLP flight operation to be at OLF.

A BETTER QUESTION: What does the Navy consider "too much" flight activity at NAS-WI? An overall cap of NASWI flight operations would be a much better metric of total impact on the community than how the expanded flight operations are split. The Navy seems to think that operation 24/7/365 is their cap without regard of the impact on the overall community.

LARSEN WROTE:

"3. At how many sites on Whidbey Island has the Navy conducted noise monitoring, as distinct from noise modeling? For how many days was noise recorded?"

COMMENT: WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS QUESTION? There is already US government data showing that the noise levels modeled do not match the simulations used in the DEIS.

A BETTER QUESTION: Why does the Navy - whose flight operations come in "spurts" - use the noise averaging method used for commercial airports whose noise profiles are much more uniform and therefore likely representative of the impact? The averaging calculations (simulated or measured) severely underestimate the impact of the extreme noise when FCLP training is underway.

LARSEN WROTE:

"4. Concentrating aircraft and training in one location saves taxpayer money, and I appreciate the Navy's efforts to promote further efficiencies. But it also exposes small communities to significant impacts. Will the Navy commit to funding mitigation efforts, including, but not limited to, construction of a hush house, funding for research and eventual installation of chevrons and other measures as necessary, particularly if a land use study makes disruptive zoning recommendations?"

COMMENT: Unfortunately, this is a softball setup for the Navy. Larsen will promote giving the Navy more money to build the hush house and do more chevron studies (which have no impact on FCLP noise). Then when Larsen gets the money in the budget, he will declare victory and the Navy will promote its sensitivity to the community.

This letter addresses ONLY noise local to Ault Field and Coupeville. More Growlers mean more flights over the Olympic Peninsula, more social/economic impact in Oak Harbor and surrounding communities, more impact on real estate values, more stress on local governments, more dependants in Oak Harbor and Island County schools, more social services to low-income service people, etc.

How are those impacts going to be mitigated?

Rick Larsen should not be allowed to take a victory lap for writing this "stern" letter to the Navy. He seems to be more committed to NAS-WI than he is to the citizens he represents.

Thanks to each of you for continuing to file jet noise reports !
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