

San Juan County Council

350 Court Street No. 1
Friday Harbor, WA
98250
(360) 378 - 2898

District 1, Bob Jarman
District 2, Rick Hughes
District 3, Jamie Stephens

July 28, 2014

Dear Congressman Larsen,

The arrival of the EA18 aircraft, known as the Growler, to NAS Whidbey Island has had much greater impact on San Juan County than any previous aircraft stationed at the base. According to the Navy's information, the new jets are twice as powerful and the resulting sound created is at a lower frequency. This lower frequency has the effect of the sound traveling further, is not dispersed by forest or land forms, and can penetrate walls. This happens not only during flight operations or engine run-ups but when engines are started and tested by the hangars.

We understand the Navy has a mission to fulfill and there is a balancing act with the Oak Harbor economy and related industries, however, we believe our issues should be addressed. The SE portion of Lopez Island is closer to the end of the runway than Anacortes. The economy of San Juan County is the environment and the environment is the economy. We have not chosen to live next to the growler; they have come to us. Complaints about the noise and aircraft sightings are now coming from all areas of our County.

Recently, Captain Mike Nortier asked that we put a group together from San Juan County to tour NAS Whidbey and discuss our concerns with him. The group consisted of county council members, managers for the County and Town of Friday Harbor, a former County commissioner and concerned citizens. The tour was very informative and the Captain spent two hours with us. We agreed to work with him to solve the issues or alter operations to direct the noise elsewhere. The following are the main issues we discussed and that we ask for your help to achieve:

1. The sound heard during take-off and landing at Ault Field is not as intense and the duration is much shorter than what is heard by our residents. We experience a "wall of sound". This wall is solid for hours when there are operations at OLF Coupeville. There have been no live sound tests of these aircraft, only computer simulations. The simulations only model the immediate area around the runway not the in-flight effects. We are asking for a more thorough test so that future modifications may be made.
2. Modify operations first by moving flight patterns away from San Juan County. Second, by not allowing pilots to use visual flight rules coming and going from the test range, so there is record of where they are flying. The wing commanders will need to address this issue.
3. The complaint line is not effective except to record a single event from a single person. We feel nothing happens from a complaint other than everyone is informed of it; end of story. The complaints need to become data that is collected and analyzed. During our meeting San Juan

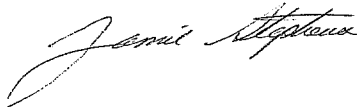
County volunteered to be the agency to do this and the Captain agreed the Navy would accept it since it will come from a government agency. Our GIS department developed a web based reporting system <http://sjcgis.org/aircraft-noise-reporting/>. The first set of data is enclosed with this letter. We are in the process of adding a button for actual aircraft sightings. We hope this will illustrate the problem to you.

4. Finally the long term solution is to have the contractor build a quieter plane. This the Congress can have done. If you specify it we are confident they will build it. The Captain agreed that a quieter plane would be an advantage both ascetically and tactically.

The council is committed to work with the Navy to find solutions and mitigation. Again we ask for your help achieving them.

Best regards,


**COUNTY COUNCIL
SAN JUAN COUNTY, WASHINGTON**



Jamie Stephens, Member
District No. 3



Rick Hughes, Chair
District No. 2



Bob Jarman, Vice Chair
District No. 1

Email: thomas.boucher@mail.house.gov