



# Quietskies

## Over San Juan County

**Update: July 2, 2018**

### **GREETINGS:**

**NAVY ANNOUNCEMENT:** On June 25, the Navy published a Press Release announcing the EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) Preferred Alternative for Growler Operations at NAS Whidbey. *The Press Release is copied at the end of this document.*

Some of you may be thinking that the EIS was completed a long time ago. BUT NO! It goes on. This is the EIS that was started in 2013, revised twice with two public comment periods and is now (still) in the "Draft Stage". *See box to the right.*

The Navy expects the Final EIS to be released later this summer or early fall 2018.

**THE ISSUE IS:** that the Navy intends to add 36 more Growlers which will add 47% more noise regionally. The press release states that no final decision has been made - yet - but the Navy would like to put 80% of ALL Growler Field Carrier Landing Practice (FCLP) at the Coupeville Field on Whidbey and 20% at Ault Field on Whidbey.

Coupeville Outlying Field (OLF) currently gets roughly 6,000 FCLP operations annually. The proposed scenario would be 24,000 annually. Ault Field (affects San Juan County) currently gets about 14-16,000 FCLP's annually which would be reduced to roughly 6,000. San Juan County would still hear the Growlers going to and from Coupeville. The reductions at Ault would allow space for all the other activities (88,000 total including FCLP's) which occur at the Naval Air Station on Whidbey.

#### **NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**

##### **EIS SCHEDULE:**

1. Notice of Intent is published (2013).
2. Draft EIS is published (Fall 2016).
3. A final EIS is then published, which provides responses to substantive comments. (Late Summer or Fall 2018)
  - \* Publication of the final EIS begins the minimum 30-day "wait period," in which agencies are generally required to wait 30 days before making a final decision on a proposed action.
  - \* EPA publishes a Notice of Availability in the Federal Register, announcing the availability of both draft and final EIS to the public.
4. The EIS process ends with the issuance of the Record of Decision (ROD).

##### The ROD:

- \* explains the agency's decision,
  - \* describes the alternatives the agency considered, and
  - \* discusses the agency's plans for mitigation and monitoring, if necessary.
- \* After the ROD is published, parties that participated on the record can sue.

This scenario "potentially" could slightly improve noise conditions for San Juan County and could be devastating for our neighbors on Whidbey and Port Townsend. It does not matter where the ax falls, the noise and jet activity affects all of us. **Our strength lies in our alliance.**

Quiet Skies position on Growlers continues to be that the noise of the Growler cannot be mitigated - FCLP training needs to happen somewhere else. Freedom of Information (FOIA) requests show that Whidbey Growlers have been training recently in other locations and are often being deployed from Norfolk Virginia and California.

**WHAT'S NEXT?**

- \* Quiet Skies is looking ahead to a comment campaign in the 30 day window after the Final EIS is published. (See the EIS schedule in the box above.)
- \* Regional groups opposing the Growlers are joining together as a Alliance speaking with one voice (25,000 + folks) opposing the addition of more Growlers and the continuing environmental and economic degradation caused by living in a Navy War Training Zone.
- \* The Alliance will be organizing regional rallies, protests, letter and media campaigns to oppose the Navy expansion.
- \* Senator Cantwell is running for re-election and has finally noticed that this is a good time to stop "monitoring" the Growler issue and actually try do something about it. Quiet Skies is putting together a snail mail campaign focusing on educating and activating Senator Cantwell. She met in person with the Whidbey Groups in the last month and had some eye opening experiences. . . more on this soon.
- \* If you'd like to be involved with Quiet Skies, we welcome new ideas, thinking outside the box and new energy. Any cartoonists out there who would like to help create a graphic story of how the Growler came to be based on Whidbey?

A SPECIAL THANK YOU to our San Juan County Council for the continuing outreach to legislators both state and federal and for their support of our efforts to restore peace and quiet by creating the Jet reporting website. The website has attracted the attention of all the surrounding counties and there is the "possibility" that a map including all the Growler affected communities may emerge.

Keep recording your Jet reports - they do matter! 10,000+ reports to date!

[sjcgis.org/aircraft-noise-reporting/](http://sjcgis.org/aircraft-noise-reporting/)

The data is compiled in an easy to read format every two months and sent to legislators and the Navy. You can access the reports on the Quiet Skies website: [www.quietskies.info](http://www.quietskies.info)

**Stay tuned, keep filing noise reports and speak up to our legislators - often!**

**[www.quietskies.info](http://www.quietskies.info)**

**Check out our Facebook page: Quiet Skies over San Juan County**

\*\*\*\*\*

## **NAVY PRESS RELEASE June 25, 2018**

### **Navy Announces EIS Preferred Alternative for Growler Operations at NAS Whidbey Island and Releases NHPA Section 106 Consultation**

The Navy has identified a preferred alternative in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) analyzing EA-18G Growler operations at NAS Whidbey Island and Outlying Landing Field (OLF) Coupeville because it provides the best training for our pilots and impacts the fewest number of residents living in the community.

Alternative 2 has been identified as the preferred alternative for force structure. This alternative establishes two new expeditionary squadrons, and adds two aircraft to each squadron that operates off aircraft carriers (CVW). This alternative adds 36 aircraft at NAS Whidbey Island. Additionally, this plan calls for nine total CVW and five expeditionary squadrons.

Scenario A has been identified as the preferred alternative for Field Carrier Landing Practice (FCLP) distribution. Under this scenario, Ault Field will support four times the number of total aircraft operations when compared to OLF Coupeville -- specifically 88,000 total operations would occur at Ault Field, with 24,100 at OLF Coupeville; 23,700 of those operations at OLF Coupeville would be FCLP flown by EA-18G Growlers. Since airfield operations are defined as either a takeoff or landing, under this scenario about 12,000 FCLP passes would occur annually at OLF Coupeville.

The operational numbers in the preferred alternative incorporate additional analysis of changes to Navy training that will reduce impacts to local communities. The reductions the Navy studied were based on two factors, the number of pilots needing training and a reduced FCLP requirement due to Precision Landing Mode (PLM), formerly known as MAGIC CARPET. Both of these factors decreased overall FCLP requirements from 42,000 presented in the Draft EIS to 30,000 annually – a 30% reduction.

No final decision has yet been made. The ultimate decision with respect to force structure and FCLP distribution will be made by the Secretary of the Navy or his representative, and announced in a Record of Decision no earlier than 30 days following the public release of the Final EIS.

The preferred alternative places the majority of FCLP operations at OLF Coupeville because OLF Coupeville provides more realistic training for our aviators. OLF Coupeville has been continuously used for FCLP since the late 1960s. OLF Coupeville's pattern best replicates the CVN pattern, building and reinforcing the correct habit patterns and muscle memory. OLF Coupeville sits on a 200-foot ridge surrounded by flat terrain, similar to the aircraft carrier operating on the water. The low cultural lighting around Coupeville and the ability to completely darken the field also closely resembles at-sea conditions from the pilots' perspective.

#### **GROWLER EIS PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE-2-2-2-2**

Both airfields will have an increase in operations, the majority of which will be at Ault Field. Ault Field is a busy, multi-mission airfield while OLF Coupeville is the preferred and ideal field for FCLP. The preferred alternative places the majority of FCLP operations at OLF Coupeville as it provides the most realistic training for our aviators.

Unlike OLF Coupeville, Ault Field sits in a valley surrounded by higher terrain, limiting pattern options and providing a visual picture unlike conditions at sea. The City of Oak Harbor and Ault Field both have artificial

lighting and visual cues not experienced by pilots at sea. FCLP at Ault Field often disrupts departures and arrivals of other aircraft not participating in FCLP; this disruption results in extended flight tracks and longer hours of operation which in turn affect more residents living in the community. The interruption of other vital operations from FCLP operations at Ault Field has become increasingly important with the addition of three more Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance squadrons to NAS Whidbey Island that operate the P-8 Poseidon, which is replacing the P-3 Orion.

The Navy continues consultations with other federal, state and local agencies as the EIS nears completion.

Today, the Navy has distributed a document to consulting parties and published this document on the EIS website ([www.whidbeyeis.com](http://www.whidbeyeis.com)) summarizing consultation efforts with respect to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) for the increase in EA-18G "Growler" aircraft and airfield operations at NAS Whidbey Island. This document summarizes consultation efforts for this undertaking under NHPA; presents information requested during previous consultations through correspondence and meetings between October 2014 and October 2017; and documents the Navy's historic properties identification effort and determination of effects.

The findings indicate no direct adverse effects due to construction, demolition or airfield operation, and no indirect adverse effects due to noise-induced vibration.

The Navy has determined that there will be indirect adverse effects to the Central Whidbey Island Historic District as a result of more frequent aircraft operations affecting certain landscape components of the district. Specifically, the preferred alternative would affect perceptual qualities that contribute to the significance of the landscapes. The Navy is continuing consultation to resolve these effects.

The Navy is announcing this information in a continued effort to provide timely and transparent information on its analysis and planning process. The Navy expects the Final EIS to be released later this summer or early fall. The Navy has considered 4,335 public comments received on the Draft EIS and updated the Final EIS with new and clarifying information. An appendix in the Final EIS will provide Navy's responses to public comment themes received on the Draft EIS.