

## Impacts of Navy Expansion and Training in Northwestern Washington State

**WHEREAS** Northwest Washington, is home to pristine natural environments including: marine protected areas, National Monuments, Parks, Forests, and Wildlife Refuges, State Parks, the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary, the Olympic Mountains, and the Cascade Mountains;

**WHEREAS** Northwest Washington's natural environment and wildlife provide immeasurable public benefits through sustainable economic and public health activity, including: agriculture, outdoor recreation options, and tourism (3 million to the Olympic National Park, 1 million to San Juan County), and are home to many communities and residents who value and rely upon the character of their regional environment for work, health, or both; and

**WHEREAS** the U.S. Navy, based in several locations in Northwest Washington, has initiated a significant multi-regional expansion of training and testing schedules and locations, routines, and technologies, including:

- Use of the western portion of the Olympic Peninsula and surrounding waters to simulate an Electromagnetic Warfare Range, flying 260 days per year, 8-16 hours per day, up to 153 jets, capable of 150 decibels each;
- Combat training on 68+ beaches in Puget Sound, the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Pacific Ocean beaches in Washington, unannounced and undisclosed to the public and to state, local and federal agencies;
- Increased range and frequency of EA-18G Growler jet training flights throughout Northwest Washington including: from OLF Coupeville and Ault Field on Whidbey Island, over San Juan County, Jefferson County, Clallam County, Skagit County, the North Cascades, the Olympic Mountains, LaConner, Port Townsend, Sequim, Port Angeles, Forks and several Indian Reservations, regularly measuring noise levels that exceed thresholds for permanent hearing damage, often between 75 and 108 decibels inside their homes;
- Unprecedented expansion of sonar and explosive activities in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the waters off Indian Island, Puget Sound, and the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary, consisting of 2,408 square nautical miles of Olympic Peninsula coastline, in which the mid-frequency sonar systems the Navy employs are capable of generating sounds in excess of 235 decibels;

**WHEREAS** the Navy estimates 1.2 million marine mammal takes (killed or harmed) as a result of Navy activities over a period of five years;

**WHEREAS** the current level of jet noise has been medically documented to seriously impact health and quality of life of many residents in Northwest Washington;

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**WHEREAS** the current level of jet noise has affected real estate sales in San Juan County and Island County, forcing local realtors on Whidbey Island and San Juan County to add a military jet noise disclosure clause to property sales; and

**WHEREAS** each cylinder contains millions of heavy metal-coated glass fibers called “Chaff”; chaff is small enough to be inhaled or swallowed and is dangerous to human health – a 72% increase in chaff release is expected according to the NWTT EIS;

**WHEREAS** the increase in military jet noise over Northwest Washington has been well documented since the first Growlers arrived in 2008; San Juan County residents have entered over 4,800 jet noise complaints on the County jet noise reporting map since May of 2014; and the Navy, having listed many surrounding communities including San Juan County, as areas of “No Significant Impact” from Growler noise, has yet to issue a draft Environmental Impact Statement; and

**WHEREAS** known environmental and human health impacts from the increase in frequency of training activity, and from testing new defense technology present irreparable harms to the residents, environment, and economy of Northwest Washington, and additional, lesser-known harms have not yet been evaluated through EIS or public experience;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that we, the WSDCC, call on the Washington State Congressional Delegation to work with the Navy to:

- (1) Require that similar marine species protections that were enacted for the Hawaiian and Southern California ranges be extended for all marine mammal species in Northwest Washington;
- (2) Prohibit seagoing activities until the legally mandated endangered species consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service has been completed and disclosed to the public, along with the permit required by law for incidental take of endangered birds and fish, and until the legally mandated consultation with the State of Washington on cultural and historic properties is completed to the satisfaction of the State Historic Preservation Officer.
- (3) Prohibit use of directed energy weapons such as lasers, microwaves and other devices, over civilian populated areas or public lands where citizens recreate and could be unknowingly exposed to harmful radiation.
- (4) Prohibit electronic warfare mobile emitters to conduct electronic warfare training on public roads such as the Hood Canal Road, Route 101 and the Hoh River Road, where civilians might be unknowingly exposed;
- (5) Not increase the number of Growlers stationed at NAS Whidbey until the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is completed and the Record of Decision is published after a full and comprehensive public comment period as allowed by law;

- 86 (6) Take immediate steps to reduce the impact of the Growler noise and training  
87 in Northwest Washington, including:  
88 a. Change procedures to require Growlers to delay lowering landing  
89 gear;  
90 b. Eliminate the use of afterburners except when required for take off;  
91 c. Install mitigation infra structure to reduce noise impacts;  
92 d. Restore the practice of publishing the Growler training schedules Ault  
93 Field;  
94 e. Prohibit aggressive flying over and near civilian communities and  
95 public lands;  
96 f. Create an emergency notification system for communities when fuel or  
97 chaff dumps from aircraft occur to notify people to stay in their homes  
98 or cars until an all-clear signal is given;  
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100 **THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that a copy of this resolution shall be  
101 transmitted to the Washington State Congressional Delegation along with a request for  
102 response within thirty days, listing the actions they are willing to take to support this  
103 resolution, or a list of the reasons explaining why it cannot be supported.  
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106 Submitted by the San Juan County Democrats. (Date Submitted 9/2/2016)  
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108 The Resolutions Committee amended this resolution and included it in the "DO PASS"  
109 slate at its September 17, 2016 meeting.  
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111 The WSDCC "PASSED" this resolution as amended at its September 17, 2016 meeting in  
112 Yakima.