



SAVE THE OLYMPIC PENINSULA



2017: Looking back and moving forward

Continuing comments

As always, we have continued to comment on the Navy's environmental documents that purport to address the environmental impacts of the Navy's warfare training proposals affecting the Olympic Peninsula. We mainly focus on those portions of the Navy's activities that involve the Electronic Warfare Range (EWR) over Olympic National Park, the Olympic National Forest, and large portions of the rest of the Olympic Peninsula and surrounding waters. In this respect we are especially concerned with the environmental and economic impacts resulting from the sound and electromagnetic radiation emitted by the Growler EA-18G electronic warfare aircraft.

In February we submitted written comments on the *Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the additional Growler Aircraft on Whidbey Island*. See STOP's comments. In September we submitted comments on the *Northwest Training and Testing Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS/OEIS)*. See STOP's comments. In these latter comments we also addressed the insufficiency of the *Biological Opinion* for the EWR.

Because of the Navy's intransigence on complying with the environmental laws, our message tends to repeat. As stated in our September comments:

- *The impacts of the activities related to the Northwest Electronic Warfare Range (EWR) are as large as the impacts from any of the Navy's other activities covered by the Northwest Training and Testing EIS/OEIS (NWTT). Since the EWR was first publicly announced by the Navy thousands of comments have been addressed to the Navy and to the United States Forest Service (USFS) regarding the EWR and the various environmental documents which are claimed by the Navy and the USFS to have studied the impacts of the EWR. Almost all of these comments have been very critical of the manner in which the impacts of the EWR have been studied. Almost all of these comments have been ignored by the USFS and the Navy.*
- *It is time for the Navy to stop ignoring these thousands of comments. It is time for the Navy to do a proper study of all of the impacts of the EWR in one document. STOP therefore re-submits its comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the additional Growler Aircraft on Whidbey Island, and the comments therein on related environmental documents (including the NWTT), as suggestions as to what the Supplemental EIS/OEIS should address and correct.*
- *Exhibits "J" and "K" of the NWTT rely heavily on Biological Opinion 01EWF000-2015-F-0251 dated July 21, 2016. As addressed in our comments, that Biological Opinion is so heavily flawed, it should be redone and corrected before the Navy places any further reliance on that document in the subject Supplemental EIS/OEIS.*

Expanding focus

In the past we have been primarily involved in the administrative procedures required by our environmental laws for the Navy to pursue its activities. We are expanding our focus to include more public relations activities. For maximum effectiveness, we have chosen to join the Pacific Northwest Coast Alliance (PNWCA), a consortium of twelve groups and growing, opposing the Navy's expansion of testing and training on and over the Olympic Peninsula, the San Juan Islands, and surrounding waters.

In May we met with members of the PNWCA on Whidbey Island to interview attorneys, and to discuss fund raising, for a lawsuit that Citizens of Ebey's Reserve (COER) plans on leading, and that we are considering joining, when the Final Environmental Impact is released for the EA-18G Growler Airfield Operations at NAS Whidbey Island Complex.

In October we traveled to Seattle to meet with Governor Inslee's Policy Advisor Jim Baumgart. We joined representatives from COER, Quiet Skies Over the San Juans, Coupeville Community Allies (CCA), and other members of the PNWCA. Our message was short, simple, and to the point - we want the Governor to recognize the extreme adverse environmental and economic impacts of the electronic warfare range on our area; that alternative sites are better for environmental, economic and national security reasons; and that there are no effective ways to mitigate the impacts of the Growlers testing and training here.

In November we were again on Whidbey Island meeting with members of the PNWCA to begin planning for a professionally guided publicity campaign to create more public awareness of how the Navy's warfare training is abusing our area, and of our attempts, legal and otherwise, to prevent that abuse.

Strategizing military compatibility

Also in November we were in Olympia to attend a meeting of the Washington State Legislature's Veterans' and Military Affairs Joint Committee and advise them of our concerns with the Electronic Warfare Range and the Growlers' negative impact on our area.

After hearing a presentation from the Navy on the importance of their facilities in Washington State, and a presentation by the Washington State Department of Commerce on its Washington State Military and Community Compatibility Strategy plan, the Joint Committee graciously gave representatives from STOP, COER, and CCA an opportunity to speak. We explained how the Navy was unnecessarily damaging our environment and our economy, and that there were alternative locations for the Navy to train.

We also explained to the Joint Committee the need for representatives from our groups to participate in the meetings of the Washington Military Alliance and have input on the Military and Community Compatibility Strategy plan.

As we learn more about the Washington Military Alliance (WMA) and the Military and Community Compatibility Strategy plan, we are becoming more and more concerned about the one-sided input that the WMA has on the Washington State government's policies towards military expansion. As stated on its website (<http://wamilitaryalliance.org/about-us/>) the WMA "is a coalition of military and defense related stakeholder organizations, serving as an umbrella organization for the three main components of the sector representing industry, community support partnerships, and infrastructure support. This group serves a primary role as a policy advisor to the Governor, other state agencies, the Legislature, and others **in support of** the military and defense sector in Washington."

In pursuit of its goal **in support of** the military and defense sector, the WMA has greatly influenced, if not totally written, the Washington State Department of Commerce's Military and Community Compatibility Strategy plan. Many parts of that plan cause us great concern. An example is this statement from the plan:

- *Effective land use compatibility preserves civilian safety and quality of life by preventing the placement of people and facilities where they might experience adverse impacts and simultaneously degrade the military functionality of the installation.*

This can be interpreted as giving military preference to any location in the State of Washington that the military desires to use. This can therefore explain in large part the reluctance of our governmental officials to respond to our concerns of the Navy's operations out of Whidbey Island Naval Air Station and in its Electronic Warfare Range. This policy needs to change.

To that end, we are forming a committee to learn more about the WMA and the Military and Community Compatibility Strategy plan, and to reduce the one-sided nature of the WMA's advice to our state government. *Please let us know if you are interested in serving on that committee.*

Pursuing our mission

As we prepare for a new year, we want to thank you for your enduring support to Save The Olympic Peninsula:

- *To ensure the best use of the land, the lakes, and the rivers on, and the skies above, the earth below, and the waters adjoining, the Olympic Peninsula of the State of*

Washington, in order to retain the unique character of the area, protect its environmental qualities, and provide for its enjoyment by generations to come.

Missing Anita

Anita Matthay, a founding member of our STOP team, passed away this fall. She was a passionate defender of the Olympics and wrote countless letters to protest the Navy's warfare range plans. Here is an excerpt from one of her last appeals.



"I've been reading "The Olympic Rain Forest, An Ecological Web", by Ruth Kirk, a recipient of the John Burroughs medal for natural history writing, who lived in the rain forest while her husband served as ranger-naturalist for Olympic National Park, with Jerry Franklin, who has served as chief plant ecologist for the U.S. Forest Service and is currently the Bloedel Professor of Ecosystem Analysis at the UW College of Forest Resources. I quote:

- *"Hoh, Queets, Quinault, and Bogachiel: these valleys of the Olympic Peninsula cradle what many consider to be the best remaining example of the Northwest's rain forest, a superb ecosystem found nowhere else in the world. This forest reaches its fullest potential on the wet west side of the peninsula where the productivity rate per unit of area exceeds that found anywhere else on earth."*

This very informative book which gives vivid descriptions of this truly wondrous and fragile land, is also full of magnificent pictures, which perhaps speak even louder than words can, of why this very special bioregion has been such a huge tourist draw for people coming from around the world. It successfully harbors endangered species such as the Marbled Murrelet, Spotted Owl, who depend on quiet to exist, and Bull Trout. Hikers, scientists, mushroom and salal gatherers, and fishermen - all who either depend on, or appreciate the rich diversity, quiet and beauty this area provides. The coast is also the flyway of billions of migratory birds biannually, many of which are also in decline.

It would be a huge mistake to allow the roar of Growler Jets and the practice of Electromagnetic Warfare Training to take place in this area, as the Navy is proposing. Please deny this contract! If you have any doubts about the wisdom of such a decision, please read the above book.

Thank you for reconsidering a decision for approval and saving this unique and sacred land!"

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