

**Themes from comments expressed in various meetings and presentations concerning NASWI, the Growler, and the local area. They do not reflect the official position of Navy League:**

The Draft EIS reflects the continued evolution of the relationship between Whidbey Island and the U.S. Navy. This outstanding mutual association has been in place since both NAS Whidbey Island and the Outlying Field (OLF) commenced flight operations, nearly 75 years ago.

Unlike all other aircraft in the Navy inventory, which are stationed in multiple locations, NAS Whidbey Island is the only base for the EA-18G 'Growler'. This speaks to the special role and capability of this aircraft.

Growler expertise is equally important. Local aircrew have fought long and hard to ensure they remain at Whidbey. This is for Whidbey's unmatched training settings, and to ensure their vital and unique knowledge remains undiluted by internal Navy politics and independent of other 'warfare areas.' (Such as bombers and fighters.)

**EA-18G Growler:**

- **The Growler has a proven record of protecting our aircraft, ground troops, and our allies.** It recently replaced the equally proven EA-6B Prowler (retired in 2015, it is still used by the Marines). I know of no aircraft which has been shot down while under Growler or Prowler protection. Additionally, Growler/Prowler expertise has saved many, many lives of troops during combat.
- EA-18G aircrew expertise and capability are in very high demand in most military areas of operations. It is this high demand which is driving the increase in Growler inventory and operations.
- **The Growler is a new jet with a new sound. It is not louder than the Prowler.** Memories are short. -- Navy personnel who have served on carriers know its distinct sound, louder than any other aircraft in the air wing.
- **Growlers and health: After more than a decade of operations, at other bases, with higher population densities, there are no known documented health issues due to Growler-type engines,** which are also in the F/A-18 Super Hornet.

**NAS Whidbey Island:**

- It is the best Navy base in the world, and was awarded this distinction for 2015.
- Many Navy families consider Island County as home, due to Island County's very high quality of life. They go to great lengths to 'homestead' their families here. This includes accepting out-of-area orders, or commuting to other Navy bases around the Pacific Northwest, while leaving their families at home.
- Numerous Navy personnel, of all ranks, retire to Island County after a full career. (They like Growler noise!)

**OLF Coupeville:**

- **Jet landing practice at OLF Coupeville began 50 years ago in 1967, and has seen much higher tempo of operations in the past, reflecting what is being proposed.** This field is considered to be ideal for Field Carrier Landing Practice (FCLP), due to its remote location and low ambient lighting. These unique conditions allow aircrew to experience near-optimum replication of landing aboard an aircraft carrier.

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### **Benefits to Island County:**

- NAS Whidbey Island is quite literally an economic engine equivalent to a Fortune 500-level company.
- Citing a December, 2013 report by the Island County Economic Development Council, the impact of NAS Whidbey Island exceeds a billion dollars. This is jobs, lives, mortgages, business opportunity, education, health care, non-profits, and environmental stewardship. It powers stability and prosperity.
- The chill of the 1991 base closure list is still in fresh memory, as is the 2007 economic downturn, which was mitigated quite substantially by NASWI.
- The billion dollar impact to the Island County economy is in the form of payroll, retiree, veteran's benefits, medical services, and impact aide. This surpasses all other economic sources combined, and dwarfs the largest private economic sector (\$66M in 2013) by over fifteen times. The base continues to expand in personnel and projects, adding considerably to these figures. Even a small expansion or contraction is larger than any private sector input.
- Whidbey Island also benefits by countless hours of community service performed by Navy personnel. School volunteers, youth athletics, parades, events, festivals, help house, habitat for humanity, Tour de Whidbey, Coupeville Museum, Whidbey marathon and many others receive extensive Navy support.

### **Whidbey SAR:**

- NAS Whidbey Island Search and Rescue (SAR) provide incomparable value to Washington State, much of which cannot be shouldered by other agencies. Their pilots, rescue swimmers, and medical personnel regularly perform medevacs, rescues, and searches on salt water, rivers, mountains, islands, and remote areas. Whidbey SAR has even received personal thanks for their excellence by President Obama (for the Oso landslide efforts).

### **Anti-Navy Opposition:**

- Small, opposition groups are present around many military installations. They have waxed and waned, through the years, on Whidbey Island. Any overtures or perceived mitigation by the Navy would never appease them. However, Navy leadership will be the first to express, they are a necessary, part and parcel of a free society.
- Specific to the local group. Their claims have been comprehensively debunked and completely rejected by objective courts and discerning elected officials. From Whidbey News Times (Aug 11, 2015): "it is difficult to detect a difference between those who dislike or fear government action, and those who suffer from real anxiety or stress"

### **Business values:**

- There is an apparent recent narrative, which states that business valuations have declined in some areas. There are three proffered explanations: Navy noise; negative effects of local activists, boycott by 'North Island' people. I know of no effort to undermine businesses, expressed in Navy or civilian circles; zero. This false narrative is not substantiated by current business appraisals. Concrete (vice anecdotal) data should be consulted prior to advancing this notion. NAS Whidbey Island's billion dollar economic impact has lifted all 'boats.' This extends to all of Island County and surrounding areas.

**NOISE. If those who supported the Navy on Whidbey Island could be gathered in one location, the only noise that would truly matter would be the Seahawk Stadium level quake.**

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