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First name: Lawrence

Last name: Magliola

Organization:

Title:

Official Representative/Member Indicator:

Address1: 108 Hogans Vis

Address2:

City: Sequim

State:

Province/Region: WA

Zip/Postal Code: 98382

Country: United States

Email: lawrence.magliola@gmail.com

Phone: 3605042645

Comments:

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Subject: OBJECTION, Pacific Northwest Electronic Warfare Range

From: Lawrence Magliola, Objector who commented in 2014, 108 Hogans Vista, Sequim, WA 98382 (360)504-2645

Project Name: Pacific Northwest Electronic Warfare Range

Responsible Official Name: Reta Laford

Affected National Forest: Olympic National Forest, Pacific Ranger District

Dear Ms. Laford,

I object to the decision by the Forest Service (finding of no significant impact in the draft Notice of Decision) to grant a five-year special use permit to the US Navy to conduct electronic warfare training in the Olympic National Forest. The Navy's Environmental Assessment (EA) is woefully inadequate and the Forest Service's perfunctory acceptance of the EA is negligent. Listed below are my specific objections with recommendations for addressing my concerns.

1. Omission of critical geographical details in the map of proposed mobile emitter sites in the EA make precise determination of location impossible. The Forest Service should insist on a map that precisely shows emitter location so that the potential impacts of these emitters can be assessed.
2. Growler flight increases were greatly underestimated in the EA. The EA claimed there would be only a 10 percent increase in flights, when emails obtained by Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) from the Forest Service show a 38.6 percent increase, and the recently released Growler EIS shows huge increases in flights, including a 600 percent increase at OLF Coupeville. The information in the EA does not address the expanded scope of training activities with consequent impacts from jet noise, pollution, and electromagnetic radiation. Therefore, the outdated EA should be revised before any permit is granted.
3. Involvement of surface ships equipped with mobile emitters was not mentioned in the EA. However, an email obtained by FOIA request from the Forest Service disclosed 275 events per year. The Forest Service should require a revised EA that addresses the expanded scope of training activity before issuing a special use permit.
4. The Navy revealed at a public meeting that contractors, not Navy personnel, will operate mobile emitter trucks. This fact was not disclosed in the EA. The type and extent of training contractors will receive and how they will engage the public in the event of encounters has not been defined. For example, will non-Navy personnel be armed and what legal authority do they possess. The Forest Service should insist that the Navy provide a detailed description of the role of non-Navy personnel in a revised EA before granting a special use permit.

5. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) dictates that a federal agency must consider the full range of impacts when considering the environmental consequences of a proposed action. In its EA, the Navy did not consider the effects of Growler jet noise when assessing the effects of mobile emitters on the environment. The Forest Service should revoke its permit to the Navy until the full scope of impacts from all sources is examined.

6. The Navy failed to provide for public input on its EA by not publishing notifications in Olympic Peninsula community papers and by not providing a sufficient comment period. Furthermore, the Forest Service failed to place notifications in those same papers a month later for its own public disclosure. The Navy issued a Finding of No Significant Impact immediately following an EA on which it had received not a single comment from elected officials, Tribes, businesses and the general public. This action was quickly followed by an endorsement of the EA from the Forest Service without any public input. These actions violate the spirit and intent of NEPA. The solution would be to disallow the permit and open any subsequent EA to adequate public scrutiny.

7. Proper hearings under NEPA were never held in affected communities, and the legal right to register comments for the official record at public hearings was effectively denied. Instead, the Navy held "public information meetings" with the Forest Service attending but both agencies refused to accept written or oral comments for the record. Because the Forest Service has endorsed a Navy EA on which not one public comment was received, and for which no hearings were held in affected communities, the permit should be withdrawn and only reconsidered after the public has received adequate notification and opportunity for input with regards to the EA.

8. The Forest Service has an obligation to conduct its own independent scientific review of the impacts of the Navy's electronic warfare training plan. Instead, the Forest Service simply adopted the conclusions made in the Navy's EA. This is a violation of NEPA and until the Forest Service conducts its own research and presents it to the public for scrutiny, the permit should be withdrawn.

9. The Navy did not consider the cumulative impacts of its activities in the EA as required by NEPA. Evaluations of impacts on the following are required but were not addressed in the Navy's EA: socioeconomic impacts to communities from increased jet noise and air pollution; impacts on traditional uses of land; cumulative impacts from noise, electromagnetic radiation, and disturbance to migrating and resident birds; impacts to humans and wildlife from chronic exposure to electromagnetic radiation. No analysis was provided of the increased fire danger posed by jet and drone crashes, sparks from vehicle transmitters or operators' cigarettes, or misdirected electromagnetic beams from either the transmitters or from jets, hitting tinder-dry vegetation. No analysis was provided of interference with civilian emergency response frequencies. No analysis was provided of other sites as alternatives to the Olympic Military Operating Area. The EA dismisses multiple cumulative impacts as "not reasonably foreseeable" when, in fact, they are. This invalidates the scientific validity of the EA and necessitates that the Forest Service conduct its own research before issuing any permits.

10. The cumulative impacts of mobile emitters, Growler jets, and surface ships on climate change was not evaluated in the Navy's EA. The Navy's 2015 EIS for Northwest Training and Testing did not analyze emissions from Growlers but from Prowlers. The Forest Service's decision to award a permit is not valid until these impacts are analyzed.

11. The Navy's claim that evaluations conducted in earlier EISs obviated the need to include analyses in the current EA are unfounded. The type, extent, and location of activities referred to in previous EISs is not comparable to the Electronic Warfare Range in the EA. The Forest Service cannot accept these earlier EISs as "tiered" documents.

12. The Navy does not define an 'event' or 'activity' in its EA. An 'event' or 'activity' could consist of a single aircraft flight or multiple flights, involve one or more aircraft, and include other military units such as ships and mobile emitters. The duration of an 'event' or 'activity' could potentially last for seconds, minutes, or even days. Therefore, it is impossible to determine what the impact of proposed actions will be. A solution would be to define 'event' or 'activity' for every operation so that the public can understand and evaluate the full scope of impacts. Since this has not been done, the Forest Service should ask the Navy to provide this information before issuing any permits.

13. The Navy's EA states that each mobile emitter location will be surrounded with a 100-foot radiation hazard zone marked with warning tape and signs. Operations would cease if the zone were penetrated by humans or large mammals, until they left. No allowances were made for any other wildlife. Public questions about chronic radiation exposure to nesting birds, many of which could be in trees and thus directly in line with the 14-foot height of the transmitters carried on the mobile emitters, were dismissed. The Navy used only one citation (Focke et al, Mutation Research 683:74-83, 2010; DNA Fragmentation in human fibroblasts under extremely low frequency electromagnetic field exposure) to conclude that the radiation from the emitters will not be harmful. The level of exposure in the Focke et al study is much lower than what the Navy plans to use. Furthermore, many studies have shown that low chronic levels of radiation exposure can be dangerous and that a threshold dose for radiation damage is difficult to establish. The Navy chose not to cite these studies. The Navy also contends that the Focke et al study showed that the link between leukemia and radiation exposure was speculative when, in fact, the authors conclusions were that childhood leukemia is well-associated with these exposures. For the Navy to conclude that radiation from the emitters is not harmful based on one study that contradicts their own conclusions is absurd. The Navy's EA failed to mention any downward-directed radiation coming from aircraft 'attacking' the mobile emitters. According to Navy statements at public meetings, attack weaponry will not be used. However, the stated intent of the training is to turn out "fully trained, combat-ready squadrons." It is obvious that the radiation levels to which humans and wildlife could be exposed has not been adequately evaluated by the Navy in its EA. Until a comprehensive analysis has been conducted either by the Navy or by the Forest Service, the conditional permit for electronic warfare training should be revoked.

14. The Navy's EA contends that the use of the Olympic Peninsula for its electronic warfare training will save \$5 million per year in fuel costs from not flying the 400 miles to Mountain Home, Idaho. This in turn will increase the time that Whidbey-based Navy personnel could spend with their families. A 1988 Master Agreement between the Department of Defense and the US Department of Agriculture clearly states that "training activities on National Forest System lands will be authorized when compatible with other uses and in conformity with applicable forest plans, provided the Department of Defense determines and substantiates that lands under its administration are unsuitable or unavailable." The Department of Defense never substantiated that its own lands were unsuitable or unavailable. Nowhere does federal law justify overriding the public interest for completely incompatible functions and purposes that conversion to an electronic warfare range present to Olympic National Forest and its spillover effects on neighboring Olympic National Park and on human populations in the flight path between Whidbey Island and the western Olympic Peninsula. The Navy has not demonstrated that such great "need" cannot be met by using existing facilities already in operation.

Conclusion:

The noise and associated pollution from Navy Growler aircraft is already disquieting in flight path areas (including my home in Sequim and Olympic National Park) between Whidbey Island and the Electronic Warfare Range. Clearly, severe effects over the entire northern and western Olympic Peninsula, which were never evaluated, will occur with greater severity and frequency than documents show. The evaluation of electromagnetic radiation impacts is entirely absent from the EA --- these effects are both unknown and unevaluated. Other impacts have been so severely piecemealed that a permit for the mobile emitters does not accurately reflect the total impacts of the Navy's training plans. Finally, that the Forest Service, having failed to conduct its own research to verify the Navy's claims, appears to be about to rubber-stamp an unfair, unethical process that has created a public anger and mistrust. I urge the Forest Service to rescind the decision to issue this permit, to conduct the necessary science, to consider the impacts that were left out, and to start again, with an EIS, an honest dialog, and a more inclusive public process.

Sincerely yours,

Lawrence Magliola