



Sound Defense Alliance, a Regional Response October, 2020

History

Sound Defense Alliance (SDA) is a coalition of groups and individuals that have come together to restore the balance between community priorities and military interests across NW Washington State.

For years, small groups of citizens in various communities have tried to engage the Navy and elected officials to address the Growler jet issue. On their own, these individuals and groups met with limited success. The formation of SDA fundamentally changes that situation. In a very short time, SDA has increased its sphere of influence and affected the balance of power by building a recognized brand at the community level and engaging with leaders at every level of government. For the first time, key decision makers are working with communities to force the Navy to listen, respond, and take action.

Because few public processes exist to ensure citizen input on military issues, SDA and its member groups (together representing thousands of Washingtonians) have joined forces to seek a balance between the needs of the military and the needs of our communities.

SDA is not advocating for the closure of the base, but is seeking to restore that balance between military and civilian communities. SDA encourages economic diversification and defends policies and institutions designed to preserve our land, air, water, and wildlife. SDA has mounted a strategic and disciplined response to the Navy's expansion in Puget Sound and the Salish Sea and has created partnerships that can quickly mobilize communities to act to restore the balance and implement a road map for the future.

Elected Official FAQ

Aren't the Navy "Growler" jets good for the region's economy?

Expanded Growler presence has had a significant negative impact on all sectors of the region's economy.

Housing Effects

- A workforce housing crisis exists across the region. Local businesses cannot keep up with demand for housing or expand because employees cannot find affordable places to rent.
- Although only 109 new housing units are created annually in Island County, the Growler squadron expansion will import an estimated 634 personnel and their families. The Navy has no plans to expand housing on the base. Why not?

Housing additional Navy personnel off base creates more hardship for working-class community members.

- The effects of inflated housing markets and increased traffic congestion are felt by residents of both Island and Skagit County.
- The external costs of living with jet noise is imposed without warning or recourse on citizens across the region: in Island, San Juan, Skagit, Jefferson, Clallam, Snohomish and Okanagan Counties.
- Multiple lawsuits have been filed against the Navy with regard to the Growler presence in the Salish Sea region. There are suits by homeowners for compensation for the damage Growler training has caused to property values.

Tourism

- Many communities around Puget Sound and the Salish Sea depend on tourism, especially those on the Olympic Peninsula, the San Juan Islands, Island County, and other regional communities.
- Olympic National Park is by far the largest contributor to the Olympic Peninsula economy. Allowing the area to become a substantial military staging ground is crippling the tourism industry and threatens small businesses: inns, B&Bs, restaurants, farms, wineries/distilleries, retailers, and outdoor recreation (whale watching, diving, camping, kayaking, paddle boarding, boating).
- Located on Whidbey Island, Deception Pass State Park is Washington's most visited state park with 3.3M visitors in 2019. Deception Pass Bridge was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.
- There are only 3 National Monuments in Washington state. The San Juan Islands National Monument includes 75 sites which bear significant cultural, historical and scientific importance in San Juan, Skagit and Whatcom Counties.
- Outdoor recreation in WA is valued at \$21.6 billion and helps to create 199,000 jobs. Outdoor enthusiasts spend the most when they are recreating on the water. This is more than the \$15 billion contributed to our economy by military and defense industries.

Farming and Fishing

- Farms across the region produce food for restaurants and grocery stores throughout the region, including Seattle. They contribute to the economy and local food security. Farmers cannot tend their crops during Growler operations because of noise deemed unsafe for workers by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.
- Quadrupling flights threatens farming across the region. Jet engines do not burn cleanly, and their toxic by-products tend to disperse high in the atmosphere. But, because the Growlers fly at low altitudes during landing practices, toxic particulates fill air, fall into waters, and drift down to soils. Healthy food cannot grow on acreage exposed to constant pollution from above, which is why California—with strict clean air regulations—prohibits such maneuvers. The average annual commercial value for Puget Sound crab, shrimp, mussel, oyster,

geoduck, and other clams is \$44 million. Recreational shell fishing is valued at \$42 million per year; recreational fishing in Puget Sound at \$57 million a year; commercial fishing at \$4 million a year.

- There is concern regarding the long-term impact of jet emissions on the shellfish industry.

Part of the Navy's job is to protect us – They would not be allowed to harm our health, would they?

Health and environmental Impacts of Growler Jets

Toxic Noise: The intensity, frequency, duration, and altitude of the Growlers is a threat to public health.

- “Real time noise monitoring” was included in the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to update the tools used in the Navy’s Draft and Final EIS. The current decision was based on outdated and flawed computer models that represent only an average of flying and non-flying times. They do not reflect actual noise measurements across the region.
- Real-time measurements taken at Ebey’s Reserve near Coupeville show damaging levels of noise, up to 115 decibels— well past the 85-decibel level that begins to cause permanent hearing loss.
- In 2013, the US Air Force disclosed that operations of the F-16 fighter aircraft in a Vermont neighborhood had assaulted children with noise sufficient to cause learning impairment and estimated that 45 percent more children will have their learning impaired if the F-35 jets are based in that neighborhood.
- High-thrust engines, like those in the Growlers, emit low-frequency “window rattling” pressure waves that penetrate into body organs and cause medical problems.
- Residential areas under the OLF flight path far exceed the Navy’s threshold of a hazardous noise zone. While the Navy appears to recognize the dangers of jet noise for pilots and ground personnel because all personnel working in such areas receive hearing protection devices and are routinely monitored for health effects --- No protective equipment, health monitoring or accommodation is provided for civilians in the same hazard zones.
- Hazardous levels of noise is heard and felt in communities around the Salish Sea, yet the Navy averages the noise including days they don’t fly.
- The State of Washington is threatening to sue the Navy over its plan to harm marine mammals in its NWTT EIS (Northwest Training and Testing Environment Impact Statement) currently being conducted.
- The Navy admits that while they fly out to training area on the West End of the Olympic Peninsula on a narrow route, they return from all across the west side, flying over most of the national park. And they say their noise can travel 11-16 miles on either side of the aircraft in an area as quiet as a whisper.

- The Navy blames the FAA for creating a military airspace in an “isolated, rural area”. This despite Olympic National Park being the Northwest’s most visited national park, with no mandate to host military training.

Water (Drinking, Agricultural)

- For years, Navy personnel trained with a chemical foam to extinguish a potential fire at a Growler crash site. Although they are no longer using these chemicals in training, they still remain on the fire vehicles at OLF and on the base. Two of Coupeville’s community wells have been contaminated by these chemicals. While industry and local fire stations are required by law to eliminate this type of fire-fighting foam, the Navy – along with refineries and chemical plants – is exempt and maintains a stockpile. A four-fold increase in operations at the OLF increases the likelihood that foam will be used.
- Central and South Whidbey islanders have no access to fresh water apart from the aquifer underlying the island. This natural reservoir is what makes Whidbey Island habitable. One Growler crash could contaminate all of Central Whidbey’s water supply and its single-source aquifer.
- New studies reveal safe levels of these toxins is a tenth of the current EPA standard. Senator Maria Cantwell, joined by other senators, introduced legislation to hold federal agencies, including active and decommissioned military bases, responsible for contamination of ground water by fire-fighting chemicals.

Questions for Elected Officials/Candidates

What is the best way to hold the Navy accountable and to engage you in our work to restore the balance between the Navy and our communities?

Would you like additional information about the work we are doing to ensure that the Navy is held accountable for a real time noise monitoring study as required by Congress in the NDAA, and working with the Navy?

Would you be willing to support a Health Impact Study of the residents of the communities impacted by the Growlers, as recommended by the WA State Department of Health?

What can elected officials do to support their communities in response to the noise and health impacts by Growlers?

Do you think the Navy’s expansion in the region should require local and state engagement?

Would you support a cost/benefit analysis that provides a comprehensive view of the real cost related to the impacts of the military on this region?

**Website: <https://sounddefensealliance.org/>
<https://facebook.com/SoundDefenseAlliance>**