



Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press Release – 48-12
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NAVY REQUESTS PUBLIC COMMENT AND REVIEW ON DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The U.S. Navy has prepared and released to the public a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the potential environmental effects that may result from the transition of Expeditionary Electronic Attack (VAQ) squadrons at Naval Air Station (NAS) Whidbey Island, Oak Harbor, Washington, from the aging EA-6B Prowler aircraft to the newer EA-18G Growler aircraft. The proposed action is planned to begin this year and take about two years to complete.

Public input is very important in order for the Navy to fully understand community concerns and relevant issues. Individuals interested in the project are strongly encouraged to provide their comments on the document within the public comment period from July 27 to August 13, 2012.

A printed copy and an electronic copy of the Draft EA for public review were placed in the Oak Harbor Library, 1000 SE Regatta Dr., Oak Harbor, WA and the La Conner Regional Library, 614 Morris St., La Conner, WA. The Draft EA is also available online at:

- NAS Whidbey Island web site:
<http://www.cnmc.navy.mil/Whidbey/OperationsAndManagement/EnvironmentalSupport/index.htm>
- Naval Facilities Engineering Command Northwest web site:
https://portal.navfac.navy.mil/portal/page/portal/navfac/NAVFAC_WW_PP/NAVFAC_EFANW_PP

Comments may be emailed to: Whdb_naswi_pao@navy.mil or may be mailed to:

Naval Air Station Whidbey Island
Public Works Department
Environmental Division
1115 W. Lexington St.
Oak Harbor, WA 98278

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DRAFT EA AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC REVIEW -2-2-2-2

This Draft EA analyzes the potential effects of the Navy proposal to transition the VAQ squadrons at NAS Whidbey Island from the EA-6B Prowler to the EA-18G Growler in the 2012-2014 timeframe. The proposed action includes:

- Retaining the existing Expeditionary VAQ mission capabilities at NAS Whidbey Island.
- Performing the in-place transition of three existing Expeditionary VAQ squadrons homebased at NAS Whidbey Island from the older EA-6B aircraft to the newer EA-18G aircraft.
- Potentially relocating one Reserve Expeditionary VAQ EA-6B squadron from Joint Base Andrews to NAS Whidbey Island and transitioning from the older EA-6B aircraft to the newer EA-18G aircraft.
- Adding up to 11 EA-18G aircraft to the Fleet Replacement Squadron (FRS) at NAS Whidbey Island to support the Expeditionary VAQ squadrons.
- Modifying certain facilities at Ault Field to provide functional support to the new aircraft type and a modest increase in personnel to support the Expeditionary VAQ squadrons.

Under the proposed action, each Expeditionary VAQ squadron would increase by one additional aircraft. Each existing Expeditionary VAQ EA-6B squadron consists of four aircraft; but after transition, the Expeditionary VAQ EA-18G squadrons would consist of five aircraft each. In addition, the existing FRS (VAQ-129) would receive additional aircraft to support the Expeditionary VAQ squadrons.

The primary types of mission training and readiness requirements for the EA-18G Growler are nearly identical to those for the EA-6B Prowler. There would be no change in the training program that would cause changes to the types of flight operations flown by the current Expeditionary VAQ squadrons (arrivals, departures, or pattern operations); the locations of flight operations (flight tracks over land or water); or the current ratio of daytime to nighttime flight operations at Ault Field. Because the EA-18G Growler is quieter than the current EA-6B Prowler, community noise impacts will be reduced under all alternatives analyzed in this draft EA.