



THE NAVY HAS RELEASED THE FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR EA-18G GROWLER OPERATIONS AT NAVAL AIR STATION WHIDBEY ISLAND AND IDENTIFIED ALTERNATIVE 2A AS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE. THE ULTIMATE DECISION WILL BE MADE AND ANNOUNCED IN A RECORD OF DECISION NO EARLIER THAN 30 DAYS FOLLOWING TODAY'S PUBLIC RELEASE.

The Navy has released the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) analyzing EA-18G Growler operations at Naval Air Station (NAS) Whidbey Island and Outlying Landing Field (OLF) Coupeville. It contains updated information since the release of the Draft EIS in November 2016 and identifies Alternative 2A as the preferred alternative.

Alternative 2A was announced as the preferred alternative on June 25, 2018. The announcement was made to provide the public transparency regarding the most updated information on the Navy's current position with respect to the proposed action. No decision has yet been made. The ultimate decision with respect to force structure and Field Carrier Landing Practice (FCLP) distribution will be made by the Secretary of the Navy or his representative and announced in a Record of Decision no earlier than 30 days following today's public release of the Final EIS.

Alternative 2A establishes two new expeditionary squadrons and adds two aircraft to each squadron that operates off aircraft carriers. This alternative adds 36 aircraft home based at NAS Whidbey Island, increases the airfield operations at both Ault Field and OLF Coupeville, and changes the distribution of FCLP between the two airfields. This preferred alternative provides the best, most realistic training for Navy pilots and takes into consideration the noise impacts to all surrounding communities.

The Navy announced a delay in the release of the Final EIS in September 2017 in order to analyze new information—specifically, a planned reduction in the number of pilots per squadron and the successful testing of Precision Landing Mode (PLM), formerly known as MAGIC CARPET. The reduction in pilots per squadron and the implementation of PLM will result in a 30-percent reduction in the FCLP requirement from that analyzed in the Draft EIS. This has a beneficial effect of reducing the overall environmental impacts. The Final EIS has been updated with a new noise analysis that reflects the reduction in airfield operations as well as a corresponding reduction in personnel and family members.

Public input was an important factor in the preparation of the Final EIS. The Navy considered 4,335 public comments received on the Draft EIS. The Final EIS has been updated with new and clarifying information to improve the accuracy and thoroughness of the analysis because of the public comments received on the Draft EIS.

The Final EIS is available for review on the project website, <http://www.whidbeyeis.com>, along with other information about the project. The public may review hard copies of the Final EIS at these local libraries: Oak Harbor City Library, Anacortes Public Library, La Conner Regional Library, Coupeville Library, San Juan Island Library, Lopez Island Library District, Orcas Island Public Library, Island Library, Camano Island Library, Mount Vernon City Library, Port Townsend Public Library, Guemes Island Library, Seattle Public Library, Burlington Public Library, Freeland Library, Langley Library, Clinton Library, North Olympic Library System Sequim, Bellingham Public Library, North Olympic Library System Port Angeles, Jefferson County Library, and Sedro-Woolley Library.