Navy Real Time Noise Measurement
Frequency Asked Questions

Sound Defense Alliance (SDA)
National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA)

Q1 Why do Salish Sea communities care about real-time noise measurements?

A The Navy Environmental Impact Study (EIS) to add 36 more Growlers at NASWI and significantly change the training activity at the two fields was based on computer simulation of noise levels. Actual measurements were not made. Experts believe that the simulations do not correctly represent the actual noise levels and it's characteristics. In addition, the metrics used for decision making such as averaging noise over the year do not reflect the impacts on people and the environment. More credible analysis based on data will likely result in different conclusions. It may also point to opportunities to mitigate the noise.

Q2 What do the communities expect to get out of this?

A Communities are looking forward to a transparent process where where they have input on the procedures and locations, access to all raw data and reporting a variety of metrics at the end. The results will truly represent the impacts on people and the environment.

Q3 What sites should be monitored?

A Selection and agreement of monitoring sites is a priority for the Sound Defense Alliance (SDA) and the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA). Growler noise is concentrated on sites on Whidbey Island, but it also significantly impact communities on the Olympic Peninsula, Fidalgo Island, San Juan Islands and other locations. The March 19, 2020 letter to Congress said "... the Navy team will place at least 10 Sound Level Meters (SLM) at pre-determined locations 'along and in the vicinity of flight paths' ... " We believe that 10 locations is grossly inadequate. SDA has spoken with impacted communities and came up with a list of at least 30 key locations. We have a suggestion in Q4 to add locations while potentially reducing costs.

Q4 Why do four season monitoring?

A The Navy proposes to monitor each location in four seasons although they do no explain why. We appreciate the desire to be thorough, but we are not aware of significant differences around the year. Instead, we suggest that monitoring be focused on the summer when people are outside and windows are open. To test the hypothesis of seasonal differences we suggest a few locations be monitored again in the winter when the climate is very different.

The costs planned for monitoring in four seasons would be better used to cover more locations as described in Q3.

Q5 When should the monitoring occur?

A The proposed fixed 7-day monitoring period may not achieve the desired accurate analysis. A fixed monitoring period may miss the impacts during heavy flight activity occurring at another time. We recommend that monitoring periods be extended until at least four (4) 45 minute intervals of Field Carrier Landing Practice training are captured.

Q6 What noise metrics should the Navy include in their report to Congress?

A After collecting data every second scientists will calculate a variety of metrics for reporting and decision making. Examples include peaks, averages, frequency content and others. In the March letter the Navy plans to "... rely on guidance outlined in the American National Standards Institute/Acoustical Society of America ...". Rather than digging in the weeds, we note that ANSI/ADA guidance is a starting point.

We strongly recommend that the Navy also apply metrics from the 2016 National Park Service report "Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve: Acoustical monitoring report." It was developed precisely for this situation.

Q7 What would SDA and NPCA like to see happen after this discussion with the Navy?

A We ask for two things:

1. Hold a similar discussion with community organizations.
2. Allow the the invitees two weeks to send written comments to the Navy before they make a final decision.