



Culture Sector
Division for Heritage

United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

H.E. Mrs Crystal Nix-Hines
Ambassador
Permanent Delegate of the United
States of America to UNESCO
U.S. Mission to UNESCO
Miollis House - Room 4.45
75015 Paris

Ref.: CLT/HER/WHC/7879/US/AF/PT 18 May 2015

Subject : **State of conservation of the World Heritage property "Olympic National Park"**

Dear Ambassador,

The World Heritage Centre has received new information from the Advisory Body IUCN concerning a proposal by the United States Department of the Navy (U.S. Navy) to install and operationalize an Electronic Warfare Range adjacent to and potentially overlapping with the World Heritage property "Olympic National Park".

IUCN has reviewed the U.S. Navy's Environmental Assessment report (September 2014), which is publically available at http://data.ecosystem-management.org/nepaweb/nepa_project_exp.php?project=42759, and notes that the report does not include a chapter on the impact of this project on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. IUCN further notes that a part of this proposed Military Operations Area falls within the boundaries of the World Heritage property and recommends the State Party to conduct a full environmental and social impact assessment of activities in and outside the property, which may have potential effects on the overall Outstanding Universal Value.

We are sending this information in accordance with Paragraph 174 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, and I would therefore be grateful if your relevant local and national authorities could provide the World Heritage Centre with an Environmental Impact Assessment in line with the IUCN Advice Note on Environmental Assessment which specifically includes a chapter concerning the potential impacts to the Outstanding Universal Value of the property under criteria (vii) and (ix).

Furthermore, I enclose two articles (see Annex 1 and Annex 2) that challenge some information mentioned in the U.S. Navy's Environmental Assessment report. More specifically, the articles raise concerns regarding the potential impact of this project to wildlife as well as to humans and also highlight the probable effects of increased noise pollution within and in close proximity to the World Heritage property.

Meanwhile, I remain confident that your national authorities will take all necessary measures to protect the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage property "Olympic National Park" and will not take any decisions that would be difficult to reverse, until the Environmental Impact Assessment report in line with IUCN Advice note has been reviewed by the World Heritage Centre and IUCN.

Let me take this opportunity to thank you for your cooperation and support in the implementation of the *World Heritage Convention*.

Please accept, dear Ambassador, the assurances of my highest consideration.



Kishore Rao
Director
World Heritage Centre

Encl. 2

cc: U.S. National Commission for UNESCO
National Focal Points for World Heritage

Information retrieved by the World Heritage Centre and Advisory Body IUCN in March 2015 concerning the state of conservation of the World Heritage property “Olympic National Park”

“Navy Plans Electromagnetic War Games Over National Park and Forest in Washington State”

Global Research
17 November 2014

Link: <http://www.globalresearch.ca/navy-plans-electromagnetic-war-games-over-national-park-and-forest-in-washington-state/5413932>

Olympic National Park and Olympic National Forest in Washington State are two of the most beautiful wilderness areas in the United States. Majestic glacier-clad peaks rise above temperate rainforest-covered hills. Gorgeous rivers tumble down from the heights and the areas are home to several types of plants and animal species that exist nowhere else on earth.

These protected national commons are also the areas in and near where the US Navy aims to conduct its Northwest Electromagnetic Radiation Warfare training program, wherein it will fly 36 of its EA-18G “Growler” supersonic jet warplanes down to 1,200 feet above the ground in some areas in order to conduct war games with 14 mobile towers. Enough electromagnetic radiation will be emitted so as to be capable of melting human eye tissue, and causing breast cancer, childhood leukemia and damage to human fetuses, let alone impacting wildlife in the area.

If it gets its way, this means the Navy would be flying Growler jets, which are electronic attack aircraft that specialize in radar jamming, in 2,900 training exercises over wilderness, communities and cities across the Olympic Peninsula for 260 days per year, with exercises lasting up to 16 hours per day.

No public notices for the Navy’s plans were published in any media that directly serve the Olympic Peninsula; hence the Navy initially reported that it had received no public comments on its “environmental assessment” for the war games.

One barely advertised public comment meeting was held in the small town of Forks, a several hour drive from the larger towns and cities that will be impacted by the war games. When asked to schedule more public comment meetings, the Navy refused.

But word spread. Tens of thousands of residents across the peninsula became furious, and widespread and growing public outcry forced the Navy to extend the public comment period until November 28 and schedule more public meetings.

It is not news that the Navy has been conducting electronic warfare exercises for years, but it might come as a surprise for people to learn that according to the US Navy’s Information Dominance Roadmap 2013-2028, the Navy states it “will require new capabilities to fully employ integrated information in warfare by expanding the use of advanced electronic warfare.”

What is at stake is not just whether the military is allowed to use protected public lands in the Pacific Northwest for its war games, but a precedent being set for them to do so across the entire country.

The Die Is Cast

The Navy already has an area in Mountain Home, Idaho, that is available for such war gaming. Nevertheless, according to the Navy's "environmental assessment," it opted not to fly the 400 miles to Idaho in order to save jet fuel and enable their personnel to have more time with their families.

The war games would include the use of large RV-sized trucks equipped with electromagnetic generating equipment that would be dispersed along 14 sites in Olympic National Forest and several right along the boundary of Olympic National Park. While no trucks would, in theory, be allowed inside Olympic National Park, the warplanes would most likely be crossing over the park on a regular basis.

The exercises would be conducted by naval warplanes launching from the US Naval Air Station on Whidbey Island that would fly over the northern coast of the Olympic Peninsula in order to reach the West Coast, where they would fly inland over national forestland and Olympic National Park, in order to target the vehicles' aimed electromagnetic radiation.

According to the Navy's so-called environmental assessment, the purpose of these war games is to train to deny the enemy "all possible frequencies of electromagnetic radiation (i.e. electromagnetic energy) for use in such applications as communication systems, navigation systems and defense related systems and components."

Six of the radiation emitting truck sites would be within 10 miles of the Quinault Reservation, and at least six of them would be right along the border of Olympic National Park.

Truthout requested comment from the Quinault and received this statement from Fawn Sharp, the president of the Quinault Indian Nation:

The Quinault Indian Nation has spoken with the Navy regarding the electronic warfare range proposal due to our ongoing concerns for our people and our wildlife in our usual and accustomed hunting grounds. Our people have lived here for thousands of years. We have always depended upon the fishing, hunting and gathering resources here, and managed these resources for the benefit of current and future generations. Today we co-manage these resources with our fellow sovereigns, the state and federal governments. The Navy has responded to our questions, on a government-to-government basis. At this time our only additional comment is that we will be monitoring the Navy's activities, to assure there is no harm to the resources we manage and must protect for the sake of our people, our heritage and our generations to come.

The Navy claimed it had served notice to the Makah, Quileute, Hoh and Quinault tribes, all located in close proximity to the proposed war games areas.

John Moshier, the Navy's northwest environmental manager for the US Pacific Fleet, has stated that their planes would be flying as low as 1,200 feet above the ground.

Yet the Navy's environmental impact assessment does not even mention noise pollution or the sound of the Navy's jets, and lists "no significant impacts" for public health and safety, biological resources, noise, air quality or visual resources. Tens of thousands of outraged residents from around the Olympic Peninsula have expressed their opposition via letters to the US Forest Service, public meetings, letters to the editor in newspapers across the peninsula, flooding article comment sections and via social media.

David King, the mayor of Port Townsend, a town on the Northeast corner of the Olympic Peninsula, has voiced his opposition to the plan, along with numerous other public officials from around the Olympic Peninsula, in addition to the thousands of angry residents.

“This is bringing militarism home in a very direct way, in one of the most pristine parts of the country,” Linda Sutton, a retired teacher who lives in Port Townsend, told Truthout. “Most of the people who live here do so because we are free of this kind of militarism. And people who visit here, come here for the natural beauty and environment, and if we allow this place to be turned into a war-gaming area, it is reprehensible.”

“No Significant Impact?”

According to the National Park Service, the top two purposes of a national park are:

- To preserve and protect the natural and cultural resources for future generations.
- To provide opportunities to experience, understand and enjoy the park consistent with the preservation of resources in a state of nature.

As for national forests, according to US Code 475, which outlines the purposes for which national forests were established and how they are to be administered:

No national forest shall be established, except to improve and protect the forest within the boundaries, or for the purpose of securing favorable conditions of water flows, and to furnish a continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of citizens of the United States; but it is not the purpose or intent of these provisions, or of said section, to authorize the inclusion therein of lands more valuable for the mineral therein, or for agricultural purposes, than for forest purposes.

The Navy’s war-gaming plans are most likely in violation of the stated purposes of the National Park Service, in addition to being in violation of the aforementioned US code.

The Navy’s so-called environmental assessment, which they claim includes plans for “protecting people and large animals,” reported “no significant impact” would result from the \$11.5 million warfare training project, which aims to be operational by September 2015.

The report, however, failed to provide specifics on either the maximum potential exposure or the intensity of the electromagnetic radiation emitters from the trucks to be used in the war games.

Nevertheless, Dean Millett, the district ranger for the Pacific district of the Olympic National Forest, had issued a draft notice of a decision in which he had agreed with the Navy’s finding of “no significant impact,” which has cleared the way for a Forest Service special permit to be issued to the Navy for the war games. Millett, however, insists that the decision is his to make, but has not made a final decision yet.

Under massive public pressure, however, Millett reopened public comment because of what he claimed was “renewed interest . . . from members of the public who were unaware of the proposal.”

Mike Welding, the Naval Air Station at Whidbey Island spokesman, recently admitted to reporters that any antennas emitting electromagnetic energy produce radiation.

“As a general answer, if someone is in the exclusion area for more than 15 minutes, that’s a ballpark estimate for when there would be some concern for potential to injure, to receive burns,” he said.

The Navy’s “environmental assessment” (EA) states, “There are no conclusive direct hazards to human tissue as a result of electromagnetic radiation,” and, “Links to DNA fragmentation, leukemia, and cancer due to intermittent exposure to extremely high levels of electromagnetic radiation are speculative; study data are inconsistent and insufficient at this time.”

However, in direct contradiction to the Navy’s responses along with their so-called environmental assessment, in 1994, the US Air Force published the report, “Radiofrequency/Microwave Radiation Biological Effects and Safety Standards: A Review.”

Page 18 of the report states: “Nonthermal disruptions have been observed to occur at power densities that are much lower than are necessary to induce thermal effects. Soviet researchers have attributed alterations in the central nervous system and the cardiovascular system to the nonthermal effect of low level RF/MW radiation exposure.”

The report concludes, “Experimental evidence has shown that exposure to low intensity radiation can have a profound effect on biological processes.” (emphasis added)

It is important to note that at the time that report was written, the standard for exposure was 50,000 milliwatts per square meter. Today, the maximum exposure limit is 10,000 milliwatts per square meter, yet even that level is more than 1 million times higher than the allowable exposure limits published in the 2012 BioInitiative Report.

Furthermore, the “EA” quotes from a study (Focke et al. 2009) that deals with extremely low frequency radiation (50 hertz) only and is thus completely irrelevant to the gigahertz radiation being proposed (1 gigahertz equals 1 billion hertz).

The Navy has not provided any relevant studies that prove no long-term effects to flora and fauna for their proposed 4,680 hours per year of exposure.

Nor does the “EA” factor in the electromagnetic radiation from the Navy’s Growler jets, as the jets will be using it to locate ground transmitters.

Peer-reviewed, published scientific studies about the harmful effects to humans of electromagnetic radiation abound.

A quick search on Google Scholar for “Electromagnetic fields risk to humans” produces over 63,000 results, most of which are published scientific studies that chronicle the deleterious impact of electromagnetic fields to the human organism.

Some of the studies titles are: “Carcinogenicity of radiofrequency,” “The sensitivity of children to electromagnetic fields,” “Exposure to extremely low frequency electromagnetic fields and the risk of malignant diseases – an evaluation of epidemiological and experimental findings,” “Extremely low frequency electromagnetic fields as effectors of cellular responses in vitro: possible immune cell activation,” and “Exposure to electromagnetic fields and the risk of childhood leukemia,” to name just a few.

One study, titled “Leukemia and Occupational Exposure to Electromagnetic Fields: Review of Epidemiologic Surveys,” states in its abstract: “Results for total leukemia

show a modest excess risk for men in exposed occupations, with an enhanced risk elevation for acute leukemia and especially acute myelogenous leukemia.”

A report titled “Biological effects from electromagnetic field exposure and public exposure standards,” published in the journal *Biomedicine and Pharmacotherapy* in 2008, concluded:

Health endpoints reported to be associated with ELF and/or RF include childhood leukemia, brain tumors, genotoxic effects, neurological effects and neurodegenerative diseases, immune system deregulation, allergic and inflammatory responses, breast cancer, miscarriage and some cardiovascular effects. The BioInitiative Report concluded that a reasonable suspicion of risk exists based on clear evidence of bioeffects at environmentally relevant levels, which, with prolonged exposures may reasonably be presumed to result in health impacts.

Electromagnetic radiation’s impact on wildlife is very well documented, as thousands of peer-reviewed scientific studies have been published on the topic.

In May 2014, a study titled “Electromagnetic Interference Disrupts Bird Navigation, Hints at Quantum Action” was published in the journal *Nature*. “Researchers found out that very weak electromagnetic fields disrupt the magnetic compass used by European robins and other songbirds to navigate using the Earth’s magnetic field,” according to the study.

That same month another study, “Sensory biology: Radio waves zap the biomagnetic compass,” was also published in *Nature*. “Weak radio waves in the medium-wave band are sufficient to disrupt geomagnetic orientation in migratory birds, according to a particularly well-controlled study,” *Nature* reports. It added, “Interference from electronics . . . can disrupt the internal magnetic compasses of migratory birds.”

A 2013 study published in *Environment International*, “A review of the ecological effects of radiofrequency electromagnetic fields (RF-EMF),” concluded, “In about two-third[s] of the reviewed studies ecological effects of RF-EMF [were] reported at high as well as at low dosages.”

A June 2011 study published in *Ecosphere*, titled “Impacts of Acute and Long-Term Vehicle Exposure on Physiology and Reproductive Success of the Northern Spotted Owl,” found that while the spotted owl is able to compensate for a low level of increased noise pollution and vehicle presence up to a threshold, “beyond which disturbance impacts may be greatly magnified – and even cause system collapse.” The northern spotted owl is an endangered species.

While more studies on the impact of electromagnetic radiation on larger animals are underway and the results pending, the negative impacts on birds in the proposed war-gaming areas are clear.

Richard Jahnke, the president of the Admiralty Audubon Society located on the Olympic Peninsula, submitted comments to Greg Wahl, the environmental coordinator for the US Forest Service, who is fielding comments about the Navy’s war games plans.

Jahnke’s letter, which he provided to Truthout, clarifies the impact on birds in the war game area: “The western side of the Olympic National Park has a unique soundscape. A location in the Hoh River valley was identified as the quietest place in the lower 48 with respect to anthropogenic sound (see onesquareinch.org for further info).”

Jahnke noted how the Navy's so-called EA did not assume any economic impact, hence categorically excluding that from their analysis. Of this he stated, "The planned range may alter the attractiveness of this region as a destination for tourists and there is potential for significant economic impact. Since this region is already economically stressed, even small variations in overall economic activity may result in large, relative impacts. The Navy should, therefore, assess the potential economic impact before proceeding."

According to the Admiralty Audubon Society, the Pacific Coast is part of the Pacific Flyway, which makes it a critical pathway for migratory birds, with an estimated 1 billion birds migrating along the flyway annually.

"The Navy's assessment includes little discussion of indirect impacts of EMR [electromagnetic radiation] on wildlife and does not incorporate the most recent, best available science," Jahnke wrote, adding, "Since successful migration is critical to the survival of a migrating species, potential navigational impacts must [be] evaluated. However, these potential impacts are not considered in the current EA and hence the potential impacts were not assessed."

Thus, the Admiralty Audubon Society has gone on record in recommending that the Navy's EA and its associated "Findings of No Significant Impacts" not be adopted.

"The deficiencies documented above are significant and must be addressed," Jahnke stated. "For these reasons, the EA does not meet the requirements of law and a full environmental impact statement under NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act] must be prepared."

Navy officials said that they "did not know" the impact of the electromagnetic radiation emissions "on small animals."

The Forest Service's Greg Wahl chose to parrot the Navy's finding of "no significant impact" for the war games project.

Forest Service Response

Wahl chose not to respond to Truthout's repeated requests for comment on how the Navy's plans would have "no significant impact" on wildlife or humans in the affected areas.

Dean Millett, Olympic National Forest's district ranger, downplayed impacts of the Navy's plans, and told reporters that the Forest Service roads where most of the emitters will be located "are remote," and added, "They don't get much traffic unless there is some activity going on in the area."

He claimed the electromagnetic radiation transmissions would "cease if large animals come into the area where the exercise is taking place," and said he "was not concerned about the electromagnetic radiation emissions" and said this was "just one more small dose" of electromagnetic radiation.

Olympic Peninsula resident Karen Sullivan worked for the US Fish and Wildlife Service for 15 and a half years, in Delaware, Washington, DC, and from 1998 through 2006 in Alaska. She worked in the Division of Endangered Species, External Affairs, and spent the last seven years as assistant regional director for External Affairs, which covered all media and congressional interaction and correspondence, plus outreach, publications and tribal grants for the Alaska region.

She called the Navy's so-called environmental assessment "bogus" because "it's relying on the biological opinion, which is totally invalid because it is old and not of broad enough scope."

A "biological opinion" is a narrowly focused legal document prepared by the US Fish and Wildlife Service for the purpose of evaluating whether an activity will jeopardize the continued existence of a listed species. Hence the Navy, in theory, is required to consult with Fish and Wildlife about endangered species and other impacts, according to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

"To illustrate this, the Navy can go explode mines on the sea floor, which creates a kill zone and alters the seafloor habitat, but if the one endangered fish being evaluated in the document doesn't use that seafloor habitat, then the effects of that explosion are called 'insignificant' because they don't affect that particular species," Sullivan told Truthout.

The Sierra Club also submitted a letter to Wahl protesting the Forest Service's concurrence with the Navy's finding of "no significant impact." The letter began by taking issue with the Forest Service not adhering to its mission:

The USFS's mission, as set forth by law, is to manage its lands under a sustainable multiple-use management concept to meet the diverse needs of people. Among these diverse needs are forestry, recreation, and the protection of wildlife habitat and wilderness. The very nature of the Navy's proposal, which involves open-ended access restrictions, makes it difficult to imagine how the USFS will be able to adhere to its multiple-use mandate as other uses will necessarily be precluded.

Sullivan takes issue with the Navy's "EA" for numerous reasons, which she detailed for Truthout:

This 200-page document covered a huge area of airspace, but only 875 acres of land were specifically named, between Everett and Mt. Baker. The lone ground-based emitter mentioned was located in Coupeville, and the number of annual training events for Growler jets proposed back in 2009 was 275. That's what the biological opinion evaluated. Not three mobile emitters and one fixed tower in 14 brand-new places, not 36 low-altitude Growler jets in areas previously not evaluated, not 2,900 Growler training events in the Olympic National Forest and another 2,100 elsewhere, for eight to 16 hours per day, 260 days per year. This is 20 times the level of activity that was covered in the biological opinion; therefore, using it so dishonestly to justify their new plans invalidates their environmental assessment.

Sullivan believes the Navy is violating NEPA by their initial attempts to not adequately seek public comment, and pointed out how the Navy tried to use the same tactic in Mendocino, California, which was met with similar public outcry then as well.

Sullivan sees many holes in how both the Forest Service and Navy have gone about making the war game exercises happen without following proper protocol.

"The Forest Service is supposed to evaluate everything else, including the effects of chronic radiation on trees and plants and animals, and there is nothing in their EA about that . . . nothing," she said. "There is clearly an absence of data, and they are not doing their own research."

The Sierra Club is clear in their findings and what they believe the Forest Service and Fish and Wildlife Service must do:

Sierra Club North Olympic Group (NOG) believes that the Forest Service should not accept the finding of “No Significant Impact” and decline the Navy a Special-Use Permit and access to the Forest Service roads for their mobile electromagnetic (EM) emitters until the Navy revises and augments the final EA, requests an updated Biological Opinion from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and (potentially) prepares a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The FONSI [Finding of no significant impact] is not supported by the final EA from the Navy due to the inadequacies of that document. Without the FONSI or a complete EIS, the Forest Service cannot grant the Navy a special-use permit and access to Forest Service roads.

Like Sullivan, the Sierra Club found sections of the “EA” that needed “to be updated and rewritten to include the newest scientific literature research on the effects of EM and Noise on Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed species in the proposed military operations area (MOA) . . . research into the literature found no less than 3 peer-reviewed articles that would contradict the findings of no significant impact in the EA and perhaps the 2010 Biological Opinion.”

Sullivan pointed out that there are at least two endangered species, the marbled murrelet and the bull trout, that would likely be adversely affected by the war games, and possibly rendered extinct.

The Sierra Club pointed out that the northern spotted owl, also an endangered species, would also be adversely affected.

The group also voiced its concerns with the fact that the planned missions begin well before daylight and continue long into the night, the sound pollution emitted by the generators on the 14 mobile units and Growler jets, several areas in the “EA” where the Navy contradicts itself, impacts on gray wolves, vagueness in many areas of the Navy’s report, and the fact that Growler jets will be flying in trios (“with two in [radar] jamming mode and one in detection-mode”), among several other issues.

The Sierra Club’s letter to Wahl contained several open-ended questions and concerns, and pointed toward one section of concern, stating, “the last paragraph identifies a process of the Navy consulting with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on the effects on ESA listed species from the stressors and impacts described in this EA. When would this consultation take place, what is the output of the consultation (a report?) and is it subject to citizen review? Furthermore, we believe this consultation must take place prior to the granting of any special-use permit by the Forest Service.”

Sullivan concluded with asking open-ended questions to the Navy and federal agencies involved:

Does the Navy intend to reinstate formal consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service, to obtain more recent evaluations of impacts to biological resources? Will the Navy revise the EA to reflect all of the information that was left out? Is it possible to insist there could still be “no significant impacts” unless you are blindfolded?

The current public comment period has been extended until November 28, and it is yet to be determined if the Navy will succeed in their efforts to carry out their war games on the Olympic Peninsula.

Information retrieved by the World Heritage Centre and Advisory Body IUCN in March 2015 concerning the state of conservation of the World Heritage property “Olympic National Park”

“Convert Washington’s only UNESCO World Heritage Site to a warfare training zone?”

Sequim Gazette
16 February 2015

Link: <http://www.sequimgazette.com/opinion/292090181.html>

Rep. Derek Kilmer, holding Town Hall meetings to address public concerns about the Navy’s plans, didn’t mention that they involve Olympic National Park, the state’s only UNESCO World Heritage Site and International Biosphere Reserve.

Phuong Le’s story (“Navy wants to deploy more sonar-emitting buoys,” Associated Press, Jan. 25) ignored the fact that much of the area the Navy wants for warfare training includes a National Marine Sanctuary. It quotes John Mosher, Northwest environmental manager for the U.S. Pacific Fleet, saying, “There’s no safety issue for the public, wildlife or the environment,” flying in the face of substantive scientific evidence to the contrary.

UNESCO standards identify Olympic National Park, as with its other sites, as an “irreplaceable source of life and inspiration” and consider it “to be of outstanding value to humanity.” Its role to protect and preserve such “natural heritage” is embodied in an international treaty. The concept of World Heritage Sites is that they “belong to all the peoples of the world, irrespective of the territory on which they are located.”

To provide some context, in South England, the Jurassic Coast, that country’s only World Heritage Site, is being threatened by a large energy corporation that is attempting to construct the world’s largest wind farm on that site. UNESCO has stepped in to pressure their government to halt these plans, saying the World Heritage Site status will be removed. The issue on the English Coast is preserving the view.

In western Washington, threats include view-obstructing towers emitting electromagnetic radiation in the midst of pristine nature; horrific noise pollution; and staggeringly complex potential problems for every aspect of delicate ecosystems on land, in the sea and in the air. The Navy also wants to fly “Growler” fighter jets, probably the loudest on earth, along migratory bird flyways.

What possible rationale exists even to consider, let alone support, allowing the Navy to override the legacy of all the peoples of the world?

Consider the well-known case of the spotted owl, one of several endangered species that make their homes in Olympic National Park. In 1990, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service declared the northern spotted owl a threatened species. Therefore, these owls are protected under the Endangered Species Act signed into law in 1973.

These endangered owls are an indicator species that survive in their last stronghold in the Hoh Rain Forest BECAUSE IT’S QUIET. They are extremely sensitive to any noise, let alone the roars and sonic booms from squadrons of fighter jets. The protected owls surely would be driven to extinction, experiencing, per scientific prediction, an agonizing death in the process.

More and more is being learned and revealed about the possible effects of exposure to electromagnetic radiation — and we do know that the devices used for war are not created with health in mind.

Overflying jets can activate sonobouys, deploy depth charges and make other assaults on all the creatures of the Olympic Coast Marine Sanctuary. Sonar ensures the demise of hosts of undersea creatures, including the endangered leatherback turtles, our state's iconic (and endangered) orcas, and other threatened species that depend on delicate, complex hearing systems to hunt, communicate and navigate.

The brain-exploding sounds from sonar, mines and underwater explosions can travel for hundreds of miles without losing their destructive strength.

In an unprecedented action, the National Park Service has declared the military's intent to be contrary to its mission and harmful to the environment and the economy of the region. All government agencies must follow the Endangered Species Act, right up to the President, who is also the Commander in Chief of the Navy.

There is no way of significantly "mitigating" the damage this will cause, despite Rep. Kilmer's attempts to convince his audiences that such measures would make everything fine. Requiring a minimum flight elevation of 10,000 feet — whether above ground level or above sea level — would not preserve the "soundscape" or the "viewscape" of Olympic National Park.

The military has other bases and areas for their operations that have been used successfully for their training exercises; expanding their operations in western Washington jeopardizes tourism and undermines property values that cripple faltering, not-yet recovered local economies.

Count us among the many Olympic Peninsula residents who believe that there is a moral imperative to stop this frightening plan, act as responsible stewards and protect this area's irreplaceable legacy for the Earth and all her people.