

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 3, 2017

The Honorable Dennis V. McGinn
Assistant Secretary of the Navy
Energy, Installations and Environment
1000 Navy Pentagon
Washington, DC 20350

Dear Assistant Secretary McGinn:

We urge you to extend the ongoing public comment period for the *Draft EIS of EA-18G "Growler" Airfield Operations at Naval Air Station (NAS) Whidbey Island Complex*. Given the range of scenarios under consideration, the variety of impacts analyzed, and the resulting length of the Draft EIS, we believe an extension would give the public a greater opportunity to share comments with the Navy.

NAS Whidbey Island is the home of the Navy's electronic attack squadrons and is one of the Navy's premier installations, as recognized by its receipt of the 2016 Commander in Chief's Award for Installation Excellence. We are steadfast supporters of the base, the sailors there, and the critical missions they perform to keep our nation secure.

Congress, recognizing the importance of electronic warfare, has appropriated funding in recent years for additional Growler aircraft beyond those requested in the budget. The Draft EIS reflects three different force structures for incorporating these aircraft into the fleet and demonstrates the Navy's commitment to NAS Whidbey Island.

On November 10, 2016, the Navy published the Draft EIS in the Federal Register, triggering the start of a public comment period which is scheduled to conclude on January 25, 2017. We are greatly appreciative that this period was set at 75 days, a month longer than the legal minimum duration of 45 days.

Our constituents are reading the text of the Draft EIS and appendices, which total over 1500 pages. Many have told us that an extension would allow them to be more thorough in their review and comment with a better understanding of the scenarios and projected impacts on their communities. In addition, some public entities with scheduled meeting dates may be unable to comment given the current timeline. We therefore request a 30 day extension of the public comment period, to Friday, February 24, 2017.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator