**Eastern Washington Airspace Extension**

**Draft Environmental Assessment**

**Frequently Asked Questions for Public Website**

**FINAL V2 APPROVED**

**Feb. 2, 2024**

1. **What is the proposed airspace extension?**

* The U.S. Department of the Navy (Navy), working in cooperation with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), has prepared a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with a proposed military training airspace extension in northeastern Washington state. The Proposed Action would include the establishment of new military training airspace by the FAA adjacent to and west of existing military training airspace and the redistribution of where current training flights occur within the overall airspace.
* The proposal does not include an overall increase in the number of aircraft flights in the Preferred Alternative, only an extension of the horizontal and vertical area and a minor redistribution of where training flights occur within the overall airspace.
* The proposed new military training airspace would be identified as the Okanogan D Military Operations Area (MOA) and the overlying Mazama Air Traffic Control Assigned Airspace (ATCAA). The Okanogan D MOA would have a floor altitude of 11,500 feet Mean Sea Level (MSL) and a ceiling altitude of 18,000 feet MSL. The Mazama ATCAA would be directly above the Okanogan D MOA, extending from 18,000 feet MSL up to 25,000 feet MSL. The total area of the airspace extension would be approximately 393 square nautical miles.

1. **Why is the Navy extending the training area?**

* The proposed airspace extension would help alleviate substantial impacts from the loss of a portion of military training airspace the FAA removed in 2020 to address civilian air traffic safety requirements.
* The purpose of the Proposed Action is to enhance training and operational readiness of aircrews by maintaining skills, providing the ability to accommodate future training requirements, and maximizing training opportunities. This action is needed to further the Navy’s implementation of its congressionally mandated roles and responsibilities.

1. **I know animals have sensitive hearing. Will the aircraft noise affect them?**

* Noise associated with military aircraft in existing airspace is anticipated to remain consistent with current conditions. Wildlife would experience similar but slightly lower sound levels to current conditions because flight tracks would be spread out over a wider area. In the new airspace being proposed, under Alternative 1 (Preferred Alternative), wildlife would be exposed to new levels of noise from fixed-wing aircraft in the proposed Okanogan D MOA and Mazama ATCAA. These overflights would result in short-term, infrequent, and localized increases in noise levels; however, the increase in noise levels would not compromise the general health of individuals or populations of wildlife.
* The Navy will consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on potential impacts on Endangered Species Act-listed species and designated critical habitat and confer with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on any species proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

1. **What kind of jets will be training in the area? How long would they be training/flying overhead?**

* The primary military aircraft that would use the proposed airspace is the EA-18G Growler. Other Department of Defense aircraft may also occasionally use the training airspace.
* For the type of training activities currently conducted in the Okanogan and Roosevelt airspace, there are typically two aircraft per training event. Each training event lasts approximately one hour.
* Beginning in 2007, the Navy initiated a transition from EA-6B Prowler aircraft to EA-18G Growler at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island. The transition between aircraft spanned nine years, culminating in 2015 and ultimately resulted in the EA-18G replacing the EA-6B and becoming the primary military aircraft using the Okanogan and Roosevelt MOAs and the associated ATCAA airspace. The type and number of flights within airspace has remained the same following the transition from the EA-6B to the EA-18G.

1. **What are the alternatives being considered?**

* The Navy is considering two action alternatives that meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action and a No Action Alternative.
* No Action Alternative:
  + No airspace changes would occur; the airspace would remain the same as analyzed in previous environmental documents. This alternative would not meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action.
* Alternative 1 (Preferred Alternative):
  + Alternative 1 includes a new Okanogan D MOA and the overlying Mazama ATCAA as an extension to the existing airspace. This alternative also includes a redistribution of where current training flights would occur within the existing Okanogan and Roosevelt MOAs from what was analyzed in previous environmental documents. Alternative 1 is the Navy’s preferred alternative and does not propose an increase to overall training flights.
* Alternative 2:
  + Alternative 2 includes all actions under Alternative 1 and an increase in the number of training activities. This alternative allows for the greatest flexibility for the Navy to maintain readiness when considering potential changes in the national security environment.

1. **Why is Alternative 1 the Navy’s preferred alternative?**

* The Navy’s preferred alternative is Alternative 1 because it would not include an overall increase in the number of aircraft flights in the airspace, only an extension of the horizontal and vertical area and a minor redistribution of where training flights occur within the overall airspace. This alternative would still meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action.

1. **What impacts will the Proposed Action have on the environment?**

* In the Draft EA, the Navy assessed whether extending military airspace would have significant environmental impacts on various environmental resource areas. Based on the analysis, the Navy does not anticipate significant impacts on any resource area resulting from the Proposed Action, but is engaging with federally recognized tribes, regulatory agencies, and other stakeholders as part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.
* The Navy will consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on potential impacts on Endangered Species Act-listed species and designated critical habitat and confer with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on any species proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

1. **Where and how can I get more information?**

* The Draft EA is available for download at [**https://pacific.navfac.navy.mil/NWNEPA**](https://pacific.navfac.navy.mil/NWNEPA). Printed copies of the document are available at the Okanogan, Twisp, Colville, Oroville, or Oak Harbor public libraries.
* More information can be obtained at the Navy’s Eastern Washington Airspace Extension project website at **https://pacific.navfac.navy.mil/NWNEPA**. A fact sheet has been developed to provide information to the public and is available on the project website for download.
* The Navy is holding two virtual (online) public meetings, occurring on Feb. 13 and Feb. 15, 2024. The public is encouraged to submit substantive questions in advance for discussion with Navy representatives at the virtual public meetings. Questions can be submitted in advance via email between Feb. 1 and Feb. 12, 2024, to **NASWIPAO@us.navy.mil**. Public comments for the official record must be submitted by mail or email; they will not be accepted at the virtual public meetings.

1. **Are there opportunities to provide comments?**

* The Navy welcomes public review and substantive comments on the accuracy and adequacy of the environmental impact analysis. Comments must be postmarked or received electronically by 11:59 p.m. PST on **Feb. 23, 2024**, for consideration in the Final EA. Comments may be submitted by email to **navfac-nw-NEPA@us.navy.mil** or via postal mail to:

Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Northwest

Attention: Code EV23

1101 Tautog Circle

Silverdale, WA 98315

* For more information about the Draft EA, commenting information, and the virtual public meetings, please visit **https://pacific.navfac.navy.mil/NWNEPA**.

1. **Will the Navy protect historical properties in the area?**

* The Navy must consider the effects of an undertaking on historic properties under Section 106 of the NHPA and consult with federally recognized tribes and stakeholders to consider any effects or potential effects to historic properties. Historic properties may include archaeological sites, sacred and religious sites, traditional cultural properties, or historic buildings, structures, or objects.
* The participation of federally recognized tribes and the public is an important part of the NHPA Section 106 process. The Navy encourages all to share information and seeks public input on this undertaking’s potential effects on historic properties by providing a written comment.
  + Under Section 106, an “undertaking” is defined as a project, activity, or program funded in whole or in part under the direct or indirect jurisdiction of a federal agency.
* If you are interested in becoming a consulting party within the Section 106 process, please provide your name, organization, and email address in your comment, as well as an explanation of demonstrated interest in the undertaking based on legal or economic relation to the undertaking, affected properties, or the undertaking’s effects on historic properties.