



Eastern Washington Airspace Extension Draft Environmental Assessment

The 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 airspace extension in northeastern Washington state.

Proposed Action

The Navy proposes to extend military training airspace in northeastern Washington state to enhance realistic training and readiness of EA-18G aircraft squadrons based at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island and other locations.

The Navy is proposing the establishment of new military training airspace by the FAA adjacent to and west of existing military training airspace in northeastern Washington and the redistribution of where current training flights occur within the overall airspace. This Proposed Action would 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.

The FAA established airspace in this region in 1977 and the Navy has been using the airspace since then. The Navy proposes an airspace extension adjacent to and west of the existing airspace (Figure 1), to 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 lower altitude limit (floor) of 11,500 feet Mean Sea Level (MSL) and an upper altitude limit (ceiling) of 18,000 feet MSL. The Mazama ATCAA would be directly above the Okanogan D MOA, extending from 18,000 feet up to 25,000 feet MSL (Figure 2). The total area of the airspace extension would be approximately 393 square nautical miles.

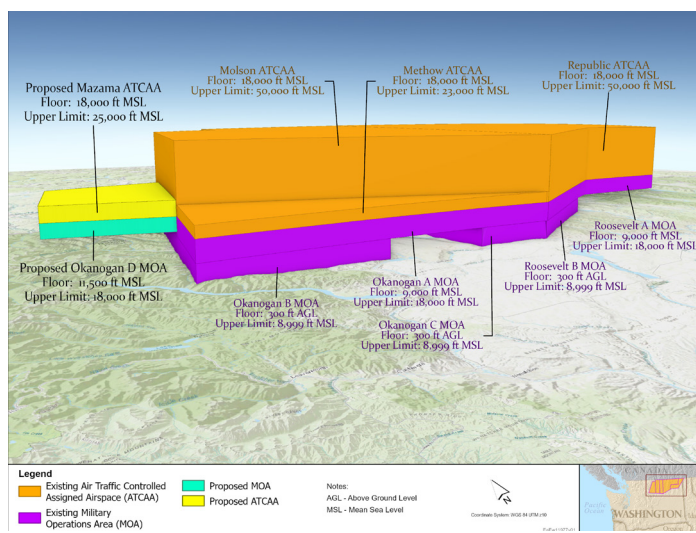


Figure 2. This 3D map depicts the lower limits (floor) and upper limits (ceiling) of the existing airspace and the proposed airspace.

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.

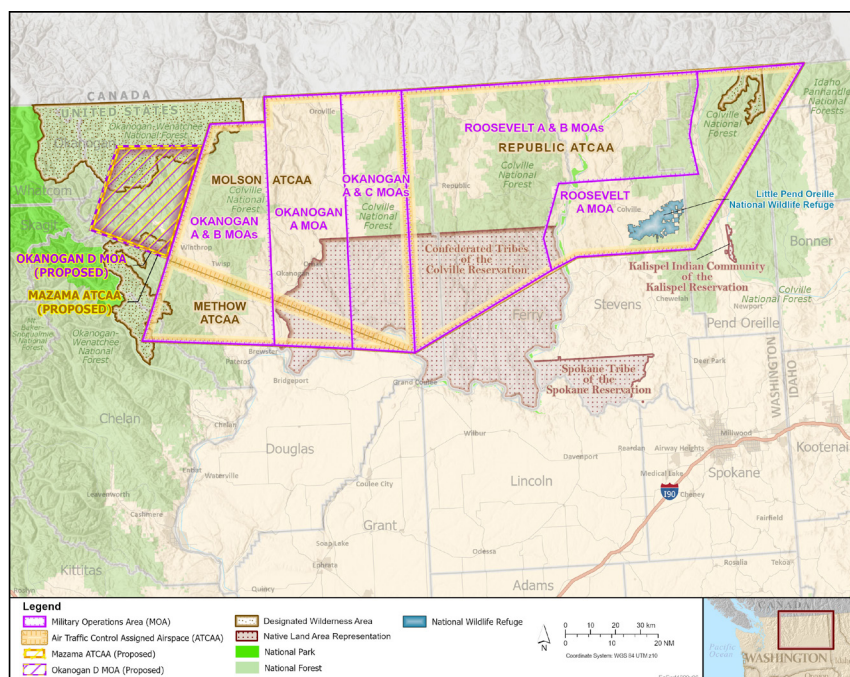


Figure 1. The Navy proposes an extension of military training airspace by the FAA adjacent to and west of the existing airspace. The proposed airspace is identified as the Okanogan D Military Operations Area and the Mazama Air Traffic Control Assigned Airspace.

Airspace Terminology

Below is a glossary of airspace terms used in this fact sheet.

Above Ground Level (AGL): An aircraft's altitude measured with respect to the underlying ground.

Air Traffic Control Assigned Airspace (ATCAA): An area of airspace of defined vertical and lateral limits assigned by Air Traffic Control for the purpose of providing air traffic separation between the specified activities being conducted within the assigned airspace and other Instrument Flight Rules air traffic, including general aviation and commercial/passenger aircraft.

Mean Sea Level (MSL): An aircraft's altitude above the average level of the world's oceans.

Military Operations Area (MOA): A type of airspace established to separate certain military flight activities from other non-military aircraft where these activities are conducted. MOAs are used to contain military flight activities including, but not limited to, air combat maneuvers, air intercepts, and low altitude tactics.

Protection of the Community and Environment

The Navy incorporates best management practices, such as existing policies, practices, measures, and standard operating procedures, into the Proposed Action to reduce potential environmental impacts.



Protecting Traditional Resources

The Navy has invited local Tribes to review project-related information to determine whether the Proposed Action may impact American Indian traditional resources and will conduct Government-to-Government consultation, if desired by the Tribe.

Alternatives

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 in the number of 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.

Resource Area Analysis

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 (Table 1), but is engaging with federally recognized tribes, regulatory agencies, and other stakeholders as part of the National Environmental Policy Act 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.

Noise associated with military aircraft is anticipated to remain consistent with current conditions in this region. A noise study with aircraft noise modeling can be found in Appendix B of the Draft EA.

Table 1. Summary of Potential Impacts on Resource Areas

Resource Area	No Action Alternative	Alternative 1 (Preferred Alternative)	Alternative 2
Air Quality	No significant Impacts	No significant Impacts	No significant Impacts
Biological Resources	No significant Impacts	No significant Impacts	No significant Impacts
Cultural Resources	No significant Impacts	No significant Impacts	No significant Impacts
American Indian Traditional Resources	No significant Impacts	No significant Impacts	No significant Impacts
Public Health and Safety	No significant Impacts	No significant Impacts	No significant Impacts
Socioeconomics, Environmental Justice, and Children’s Environmental Health and Safety Risk	No significant Impacts	No significant Impacts	No significant Impacts

Alternative 1 is the Navy’s preferred alternative because it does not include an increase in the number of flights, 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.

National Environmental Policy Act and National Historic Preservation Act Processes

The Navy invites you to review the Draft EA and welcomes your substantive comments on the accuracy and adequacy of the environmental impact analysis and whether the project would affect historic properties.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is a U.S. law that requires federal agencies to identify and analyze the potential environmental impacts of a proposed action before deciding whether to proceed with that action. The law encourages and facilitates public involvement to inform decision makers on actions that may affect the community or the environment. The Draft EA is available for public review and comment through 11:59 p.m. PST on **Feb. 23, 2024**. The Navy requests comments on the accuracy and adequacy of the environmental impact analysis presented in the Draft EA. Comments will be considered during the development of the Final EA.

The participation of federally recognized tribes and the public is an important part of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 process. 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. 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. Historic properties may include archaeological sites, sacred and religious sites, traditional cultural properties, or historic buildings, structures, or objects.

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.

Next Steps

After completion of the Final EA, the Navy will determine the next steps in the NEPA process. If the findings indicate environmental impacts would be significant, the Navy would conduct additional analyses and prepare an Environmental Impact Statement. Alternatively, if the findings indicate that impacts would not be significant, a Finding of No Significant Impact would be prepared and signed. The FAA will conduct an independent review of the Proposed Action and issue its own decision, such as a Finding of No Significant Impact or Record of Decision. At that time, the FAA would initiate its process for establishing airspace. All environmental impact analyses, including consideration of public comments, would be completed and approvals obtained before the Navy and FAA would move forward with the Proposed Action.

The Draft EA is available for public review and comment through 11:59 p.m. PST on **Feb. 23, 2024**. To be substantive, public comments should address:

- Any important issues or concerns that should be considered by the decision makers and are not already included in the Draft EA.
- Any errors in the evaluation of potential environmental impacts that could change the conclusions made in the Draft EA.
- Any additional facts or data the Navy should consider while preparing the Final EA.

National Environmental Policy Act Process

Preparation of Draft EA
(Completed Winter 2024)

Public Review and Comment on Draft EA
(Jan. 12, 2024 – Feb. 23, 2024)
(Current Phase)

Preparation of Final EA
(Spring 2024)

Finding of No Significant
Impact (FONSI)

Notice of Availability
of Final EA/FONSI

Notice of Intent
to Prepare an
Environmental Impact
Statement
(If EA finds Proposed Action
would have significant impacts)

Boxes with ► indicate opportunities for public involvement.

The Draft EA is available at <https://pacific.navfac.navy.mil/NWNEPA> and at the following public libraries:

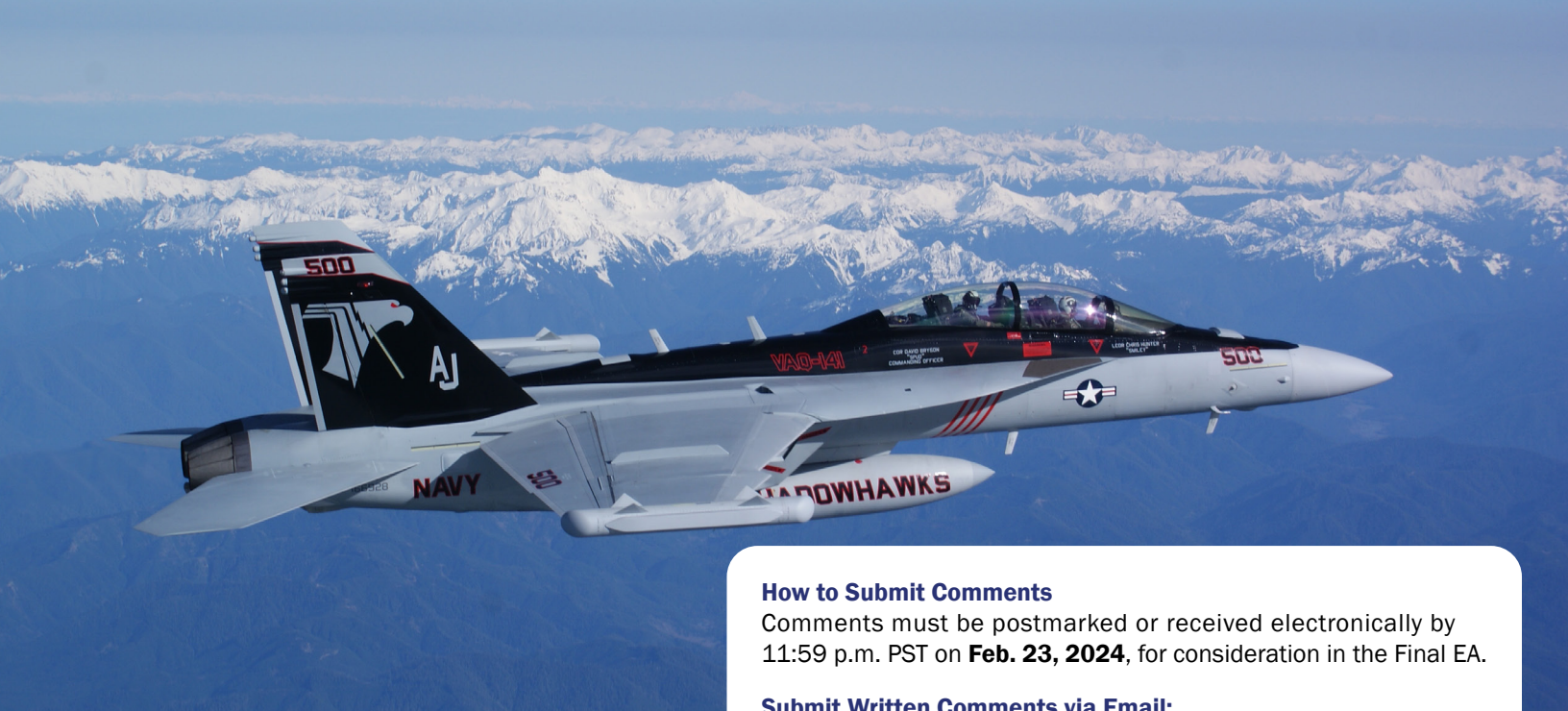
Okanogan Public Library
228 Pine St.
Okanogan, WA 98840

Twisp Public Library
201 Methow Valley Highway #1
Twisp, WA 98856

Colville Public Library
195 S. Oak St.
Colville, WA 99114

Oroville Public Library
1276 Main St.
Oroville, WA 98844

Oak Harbor Public Library
1000 SE Regatta Drive
Oak Harbor, WA 98277



Public involvement is a fundamental aspect of the NEPA and NHPA Section 106 processes. The Navy welcomes and appreciates the public's substantive comments on the Draft EA and whether the Proposed Action would impact historic properties.

How to Submit Comments

Comments must be postmarked or received electronically by 11:59 p.m. PST on **Feb. 23, 2024**, for consideration in the Final EA.

Submit Written Comments via Email:

navfac-nw-NEPA@us.navy.mil

Mail Written Comments to:

Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Northwest
Attention: Code EV23
1101 Tautog Circle
Silverdale, WA 98315

Please visit the project website at

<https://pacific.navfac.navy.mil/NWNEPA> for more information, or contact Naval Air Station Whidbey Island Public Affairs at NASWIPAO@us.navy.mil.

Virtual Public Meetings

The Navy is holding two virtual public meetings, consisting of a presentation by the Navy and a question-and-answer session, to inform the public about the Proposed Action and environmental impact analysis. Visit <https://pacific.navfac.navy.mil/NWNEPA> to learn more about the virtual public meetings. An audio-only option will also be available. The virtual public meetings will be held:

Tuesday, Feb. 13, 2024, 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Join the Meeting:

Online: <https://mantech.zoomgov.com/j/1611284707>

Phone: 1-669-254-5252

Webinar ID: 161 128 4707

Thursday, Feb. 15, 2024, 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Join the Meeting:

Online: <https://mantech.zoomgov.com/j/1616638848>

Phone: 1-669-254-5252

Webinar ID: 161 663 8848

Substantive questions for discussion with Navy representatives at the virtual public meetings 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.

Please help the Navy inform the community about the availability of the Draft EA and the virtual public meetings by sharing this information.