



Ault Field

Naval Air Station Whidbey Island

Oak Harbor, Washington

Off-Base Drinking Water Sampling for PFAS



January 2024

The Navy is requesting permission to sample drinking water obtained from wells within a sampling area near Ault Field at Naval Air Station (NAS) Whidbey Island for certain per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, commonly known as PFAS.

PFAS are a family of thousands of different chemicals which have been widely used in many household and industrial products since the 1950s. The Navy and Department of Defense (DoD) have developed proactive policies to address past releases of PFAS, including perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS), at installations nationwide.

The most common activity associated with the historical release of PFAS to the environment at Ault Field (Figure 1) is the use of firefighting foam (specifically aqueous film-forming foam, or AFFF) for testing, training, firefighting, and life-saving emergency responses. Due to this historical use, PFAS are present in the groundwater on base and have been detected in nearby off-base drinking water wells located in the direction that groundwater flows away from the base.

OFF-BASE DRINKING WATER SAMPLING SUMMARY

In November 2016, the Navy began sampling in the initial sampling area (Figure 2). The sampling area was established 1 mile in the estimated direction of groundwater flow from potential on-base PFAS release areas (Figure 2). In March 2017, June 2017, and again in January 2019, the Navy expanded the off-base drinking water sampling to the south and east of Ault Field based on detections of PFOA and/or PFOS above 70 parts per trillion (ppt) in the previous sampling area. Of the 154 off-base drinking water wells sampled, PFOA and/or PFOS were not detected in 144 wells. PFOA and/or PFOS were detected below 70 ppt in 8 drinking water wells, and PFOA and/or PFOS were detected above 70 ppt in 2 drinking water wells (Figure 2). Off-base drinking water results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Results of Off-Base Drinking Water Sampling for PFOA and PFOS near Ault Field	
PFOA + PFOS	Number of wells
No detections	144
Detections below 70 ppt	8
Detections above 70 ppt	2
Total	154

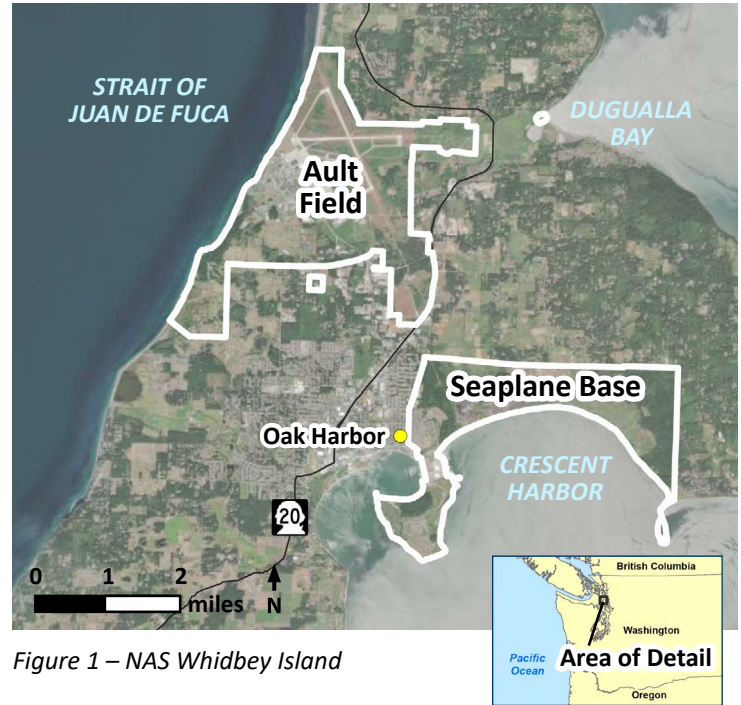


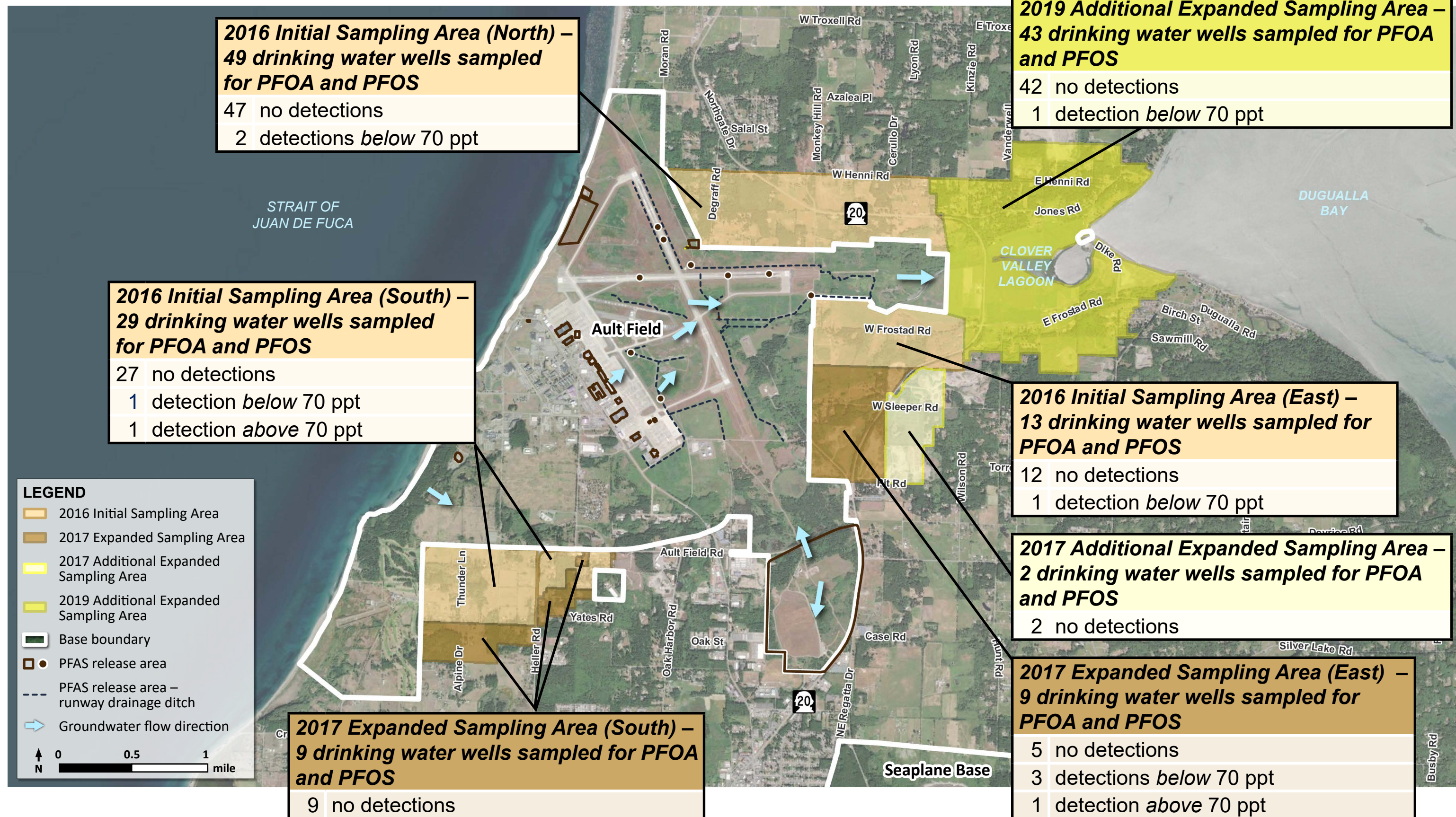
Figure 1 – NAS Whidbey Island

To monitor drinking water in this area, in 2017, the Navy began sampling drinking water at certain properties twice per year. This includes properties with prior PFAS detections and those next to the two properties with PFOA and/or PFOS above 70 ppt in drinking water wells. In 2021, the Navy connected the two properties with PFOA and/or PFOS above 70 ppt in drinking water wells, including one to a public water system and one to a new, deeper drinking well.

Records indicate most of the properties within the Ault Field sampling area use a private or community well for drinking water. The Navy requests property owner permission to sample these drinking water wells, if not previously sampled, to determine if PFOA and PFOS, individually or combined, are above 70 ppt in these drinking water wells. If your drinking water is provided by a public water system, the Navy does not need to sample your drinking water.

The Navy will provide bottled water for drinking and cooking to any property owner or tenant in the sampling area whose well contains drinking water with PFOA and PFOS, individually or combined, above 70 ppt. The Navy will provide bottled water until a long-term solution is implemented.

Figure 2 – Sampling Area



There is no regulatory requirement to conduct this drinking water sampling. The Navy is conducting the sampling in collaboration with partners such as the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 10, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) Region 10, Washington State Department of Ecology, Washington State Department of Health, and Island County Public Health Department.

PFAS

PFAS have been used in many household and industrial products because of their stain- and water-repellent properties. PFAS are now present virtually everywhere in the world because of the large amounts that have been manufactured and used.

Once these compounds are released, many of them tend to stay in the environment for a very long time. Several PFAS are chemicals of emerging concern. Although the EPA has started the process to establish regulatory levels for several PFAS in drinking water, there are currently no Safe Drinking Water Act regulatory standards. The EPA has developed drinking water health advisories for a small number of PFAS; these advisories are non-enforceable and non-regulatory. The advisories provide technical information to states and other public health officials on health effects, analytical methodologies, and treatment technologies.

On March 14, 2023, the EPA proposed a draft regulatory drinking water standard for certain PFAS, including PFOA and PFOS. In response, the DoD has issued the following statement:

“DoD respects and values the public comment process on this proposed nationwide drinking water rule and looks forward to the clarity that a final regulatory drinking water standard for PFAS will provide. In anticipation of the final standard that EPA expects to publish by the end of 2023, the DoD is assessing what actions DoD can take to be prepared to incorporate EPA’s final regulatory standard into our current cleanup process, such as reviewing our existing data and conducting additional sampling where necessary. In addition, DoD will incorporate nationwide PFAS cleanup guidance, issued by EPA and applicable to all owners and operators under the federal cleanup law, as to when to provide alternate water when PFAS are present.”

More information about EPA’s actions for PFAS in drinking water is online at: <https://www.epa.gov/sdwa/and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas>.

NAVY POLICY

For now, the Navy is continuing to follow the policy it issued in June 2016 to conduct investigations at installations where there has been a known or suspected release of PFAS to the environment. The first priority with these investigations is to ensure that PFOA and PFOS concentrations in drinking water wells are not above 70 ppt, individually or combined, as a result of Navy operations.

ACTIONS BASED ON RESULTS

Preliminary drinking water sample results are typically received from the laboratory within 30 days after the samples are collected, and final laboratory reports are typically available within 3 months. Property owners (and tenants, if possible) will be called to notify them of their preliminary drinking water sample results. Final drinking water sample results will be mailed to property owners and tenants. Final drinking water sampling results are available online at: <https://www.acq.osd.mil/eie/eer/ecc/pfas/map/pfasmap.html> for transparency with the public. Individual drinking water sample results cannot be linked with the sampled property on this website.

The Navy will provide bottled water for drinking and cooking to any property owner or tenant in the sampling area whose drinking water well contains PFOA and PFOS, individually or combined, above 70 ppt and will continue to provide bottled water until a long-term solution is implemented.

The Navy will continue to investigate PFAS at Ault Field and evaluate what actions are needed on base. The Navy is committed to ensuring the safety of the property owners and tenants in the community. The public can view Ault Field environmental restoration program documents online at: <https://go.usa.gov/xh2Rd>.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS OFF-BASE DRINKING WATER SAMPLING

<https://pacific.navfac.navy.mil/NASWIPFAS>

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT

Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Northwest
Public Affairs Officer

(360) 340-5592 or navfacnwpao@us.navy.mil

HEALTH INFORMATION

Studies on PFOA and PFOS have found both compounds in the blood samples of the general population. Research to better understand health effects from exposure to low levels of PFOA, PFOS, and other PFAS is ongoing. Federal agencies such as the ATSDR and the EPA continue to conduct and support research into health effects associated with PFAS exposure. More information about health effects can be found online at:
ATSDR: <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/index.html>
EPA: <https://www.epa.gov/pfas>