



# Outlying Landing Field Coupeville Naval Air Station Whidbey Island Coupeville, 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 Outlying Landing Field (OLF) Coupeville 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 OLF Coupeville (**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 September 2016, the Navy conducted on-base drinking water sampling at OLF Coupeville. PFOA was detected in one on-base drinking water well below 70 parts per trillion (ppt) near Building 2807 (**Figure 2**). At the time, groundwater flow direction was not well understood and estimated to flow in all directions away from Building 2807. The initial sampling area was identified as 1-mile in all directions from Building 2807 (**Figure 2**). In November 2016, the Navy began sampling in the initial off-base sampling area.

In February 2017, the Navy expanded the off-base drinking water sampling area to the south of OLF Coupeville based on detections of PFOA and/or PFOS above 70 ppt in the 2016 initial sampling area. Of the 118 off-base drinking water wells sampled, which includes private, community, and municipal supply wells, PFOA and/or PFOS were not detected in 105 wells. PFOA and/or PFOS were detected below 70 ppt in 4 drinking water wells, and PFOA and/or PFOS were detected above 70 ppt in 9 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 OLF Coupeville	
PFOA + PFOS	Number of wells
No detections	105
Detections <i>below</i> 70 ppt	4
Detections <i>above</i> 70 ppt	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>118</b>

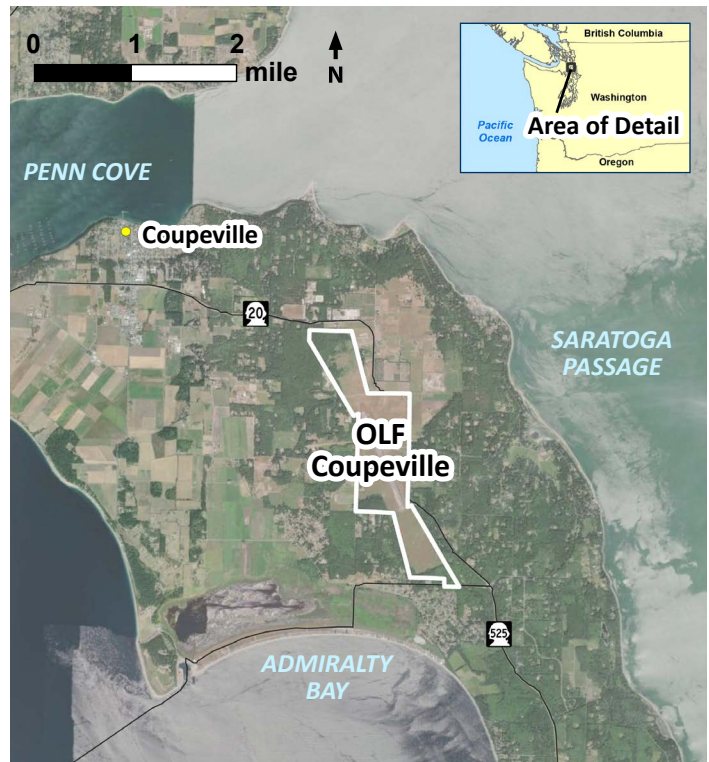


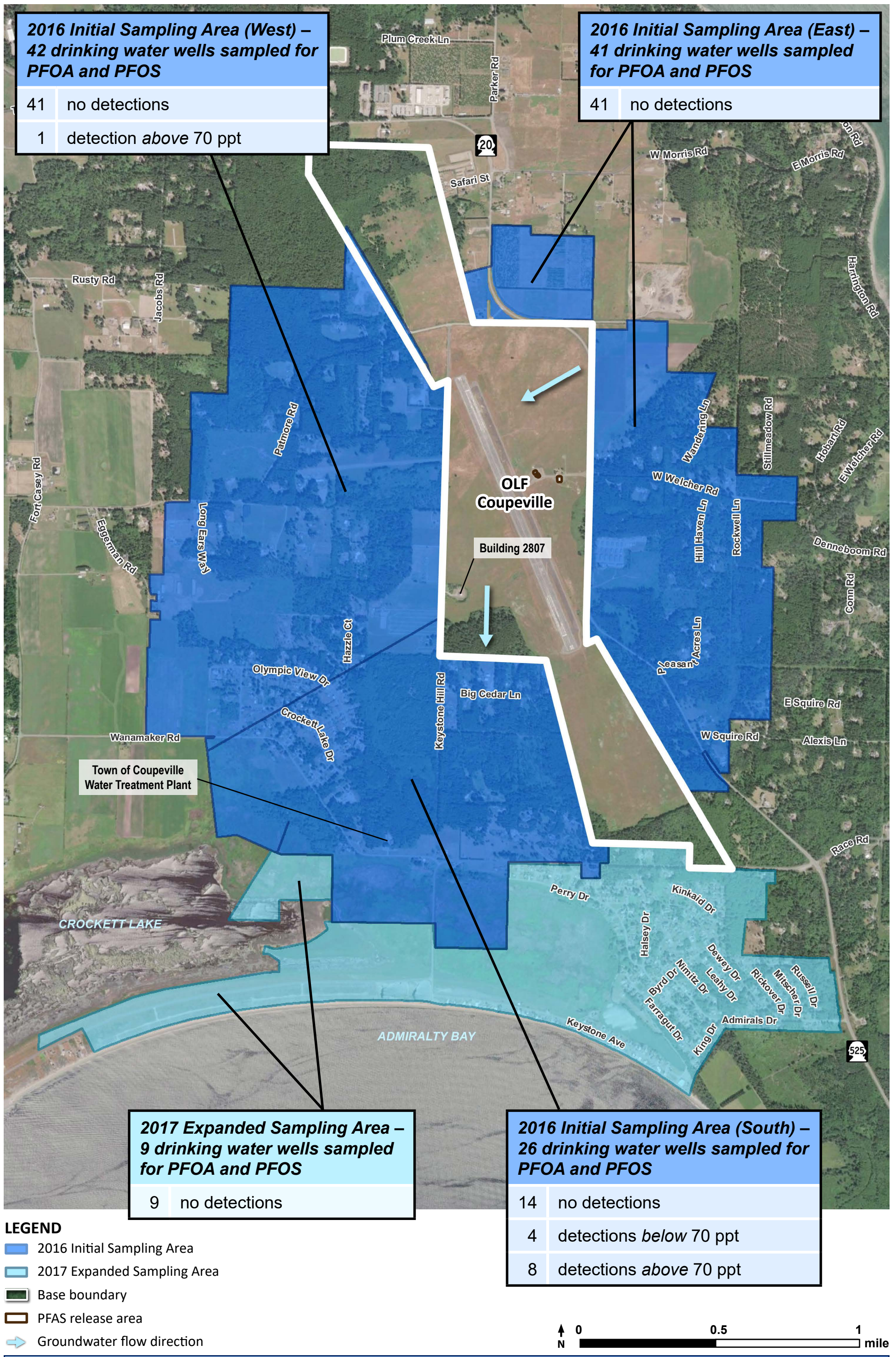
Figure 1 – OLF Coupeville

In 2020, the Navy connected several properties to the Town of Coupeville’s water system and added PFAS treatment to the Town of Coupeville’s water system. As of January 2024, the Navy continues progress towards connecting the remaining homes. To monitor drinking water in this area, the Navy has been sampling drinking water at certain properties twice per year since 2017. This includes properties with prior PFAS detections and those next to the properties with PFOA and/or PFOS above 70 ppt.

Records indicate most of the properties within the OLF Coupeville sampling area use a private or community well for drinking water. The Navy requests property owner

**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



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.

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 OLF Coupeville 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 OLF Coupeville 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](mailto: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>