



Project Background – Understanding Context



As described in the 2018 Final EIS

Proposed Action

The Navy proposed to:

- Continue and expand existing Growler operations at the Naval Air Station (NAS) Whidbey Island complex, which includes field carrier landing practice (FCLP) by Growler aircraft that occurs at Ault Field and Outlying Landing Field (OLF) Coupeville
- Increase electronic attack capabilities by adding 35 or 36 aircraft to support an expanded U.S. Department of Defense mission for identifying, tracking, and targeting in a complex electronic warfare environment
- Construct and renovate facilities at Ault Field to accommodate additional Growler aircraft
- Station additional personnel and their family members at the NAS Whidbey Island complex and in the surrounding community

In addition, the Navy would continue all flight operations of other aircraft at the NAS Whidbey Island complex

Purpose and Need

The stated purpose and need of the Proposed Action as evaluated and analyzed in the 2018 EIS is as follows:

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to augment the Navy's existing Electronic Attack community at NAS Whidbey Island by operating additional Growler aircraft as appropriated by Congress. The Navy needs to effectively and efficiently increase electronic attack capabilities in order to counter increasingly sophisticated threats and provide more aircraft per squadron in order to give operational commanders more flexibility in addressing future threats and missions. The need for the Proposed Action is to maintain and expand Growler operational readiness to support national defense requirements under Title 10, United States Code, Section 8062.

The Navy's Preferred Alternative

The Navy evaluated three alternatives in the 2018 Final EIS. As part of this process, the Navy identified an alternative, called Alternative 2A, as the preferred alternative. The preferred alternative would expand expeditionary and carrier capabilities by establishing two new **expeditionary squadrons**, adding two additional aircraft and additional squadron personnel to each of the nine existing **carrier squadrons**, augmenting the **Fleet Replacement Squadron (FRS)** with eight additional aircraft and additional squadron personnel, and redistributing field carrier landing practice (FCLP) between Ault Field and NAS Whidbey Island's Outlying Landing Field (OLF) Coupeville, such that 80 percent of all projected FCLPs would be conducted at OLF Coupeville and 20 percent at Ault Field. In total, this alternative would result in a net increase of 36 aircraft, and an estimated increase of 628 Navy personnel and 860 dependents.

Carrier squadrons deploy on aircraft carriers and conduct periodic field carrier landing practice, or FCLP, to requalify to land on aircraft carriers.

Expeditionary squadrons deploy to overseas land-based locations and therefore do not normally require FCLP prior to deployment.

Fleet Replacement Squadron (FRS) is a **training squadron** responsible for "post-graduate" training of newly designated Navy pilots and Naval Flight Officers, including those returning to flight status after non-flying assignments or transitioning to a new aircraft for duty.

