July 2, 2022

Senator Maria Cantwell

915 2nd Ave. Suite 3206

Seattle, Wa

Dear Senator Cantwell,

I recently spend another week up in Olympic National Park and took in the marvelous old growth forests and spectacular views of the Olympic Mountains. The park is a sanctuary of natural quiet and has been described as “the most acoustically diverse” and “least noise polluted” place in the Lower 48 states, according to local resident and natural sound expert Gordon Hempton. This pristine area is hosts to 24 species of flora and fauna not found anywhere else. Many of the wildlife species depend upon sound to hunt and find mates.

The park is located minutes of Naval Air Station Whidbey Island (NASWI) which has served as a military airbase since WWII. More recently, NASWI has become home to squadrons of EA-18G “Growler ”jets which produce deep cacophonous roar at approximately 70dbhl. The Navy has recently based more than 80 Growlers at NASWI and plans to increase that number to 160 with additional training over and around Olympic National Park.

Growlers are too loud for this quiet place and are degrading the park’s natural resources. The US Naval Research Advisory Committee posted a report in 2009 indicating that the Growlers were some of the loudest aircraft in the skies and can damage hearing in nearby communities. The noisy training will impair some of the most popular wilderness, trails and visitor centers of Olympic National Park, including the famous Hoh Rain Forest and spectacular wilderness beaches.

The Navy can and should conduct Growler training elsewhere. According to the Navy’s own analysis, training at the Olympics is a nonessential convenience. Olympic airspace is the closest to the Navy’s runways on Whidbey Island, but there are other airbases and military airspace available to them. One example is Mountain Home Air Force Base in Southern Idaho, a short flight away, where the Navy is currently conducting similar training.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Laurie Kerr