Combined Navy Comments - post 12-18-20

Please do not support the Navy’s plan to use state parks for military purposes of any kind! Our parks should be off limits to military intrusion! Our skies are already overfull of military hardware, don’t let the places people go to get away be sacrificed.  

I’m writing about the proposal to allow the Navy to train in our State Parks. I feel this is a dangerous and totally inappropriate idea. These parks are for the use of citizens, an important option as a place to seek quiet, rejuvenate and bring children. There are already thousands of acres set aside for military training. There is absolutely no need to allow the military to train in our parks.

I’m writing about the proposal to allow the Navy to train in our State Parks. I feel this is a dangerous and totally inappropriate idea. These parks are for the use of citizens, an important option as a place to seek quiet, rejuvenate and bring children. There are already thousands of acres set aside for military training. There is absolutely no need to allow the military to train in our parks.

First, I went over some of the documents on your website. Admiral Barnett didn’t send me - the Oak Harbor Navy League did with a priority one message to the membership that Team Whidbey has got issues getting a permit to properly train Navy SEALs on our beaches. Second, I understand the US Navy’s request for a permit to use our state parks to train to defend this country, rescue aid workers, secure landing sites just-in-case, and yes kill terrorists is a permit renewal requesting more parks to not just increase the quality of training but reduce the risk of unintentional public interaction. This training is about getting our SEALs in quietly and leaving no trace. This is NOT Field Carrier Landing Practice; it’s all about stealth. Third, I reviewed your briefing of 19 November 2020. I am convinced and relieved ample safeguards are in the permit to protect both the public and the servicemembers during this training. Those safeguards are key to my support. Fourth as someone working with a state legislator to enshrine public comment as a right in the Washington State Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) in 2021 legislation; I am grateful we have ample public comment into this process. However much of this public comment has been submitted without key data that was in your briefing of 19 November 2020. I hope you will defer to the data and the law over those misguided fellow civilians having histrionics based on a misinformation campaign as much as I am grateful for the protection of the US Navy to exercise my constitutional freedoms. Finally, this is about supporting our troops to provide ample training to defend this country & human rights. This is also about upholding the law, especially with RCW 79A.05.070 plus thoughtful permit requirements and sincere statements by Navy Region Northwest commanders they will protect the environment.

I could pound away some more, but I won’t. I ask you please approve the Navy’s permit request with all the conditions therein.

Our family absolutely and very strongly opposes allowing the Navy to “invade” Deception Pass State Park for any reason at any time. We are sick and tired of having to put up with the unacceptable roar of the Navy jets flying right over our house in Anacortes, and we sure as heck do not want to see them “invading” Deception Pass State Park for any reason. The Navy is not a good neighbor, to say the least. People go to the Park to relax, hike, sit on the beach, picnic, fish, etc. They do not need to be terrorized by commandos. Please do not allow the Navy to talk their way into this terrible idea. Thank you.

State parks are for the people to get away into nature to relax, hike and have peace.
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<tr>
<th>Combined Navy Comments- post 12-18-20</th>
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<tr>
<td>There is no reason for any state park to be used as training for the Navy. People recreating and camping don’t mix with Navy trainees sneaking through the park at night. According to the article in the Skagit Valley Herald you received 384 comments, the majority opposed to granting this request by the Navy. As I recall, Whidbey NAS has a large landing beach on their own property and some cliffs and open land. Why not use their own property? Listen to the people! No training in state parks.</td>
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<td>I find it beyond appalling that Washington state parks are even considering the allowance of Naval exercises on and around their parks. This is a huge travesty and unforgivable if passed. Don’t rave on about the price of freedom—the Growlers are more than enough. Indian Island and possible nuclear storage depots are more than enough. Grow a backbone!</td>
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<td>I have been a frequent user of our marine State Parks. I have worked as a civilian for the Department of Navy. I’m familiar with the Park waterfront environments and with the Navy’s need to train. I agree with the possibility of training without significant impact, but I know from experience that the implementers do not always share the vision of the planners. There is a very real possibility that Navy training can adversely impact the environment of our State Parks. Therefore it is imperative that State Park personnel inspect impacted training sites following Navy use. No doubt the Navy will be ready to implement whatever environmental repairs are needed. Please do not rely on the Navy trainers to follow through on this. Their mission is training, not environmental protection.</td>
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<td>I live on Fidalgo Island. The Navy frankly does not respect the residents of the island when flying the Growlers. The flight patterns and noise generated by the planes are not only a nuisance, but also a health hazard due to the noise generated. The Navy ignores the input of the community when it comes to any changes in their landing patterns and number of flights even when putting on a public relations stunt to solicit feedback. They do what they want. Well what a surprise! Now they want to invade a much loved and the most visited park in Washington state. This feels like an invasion of a public resource that is funded with tax dollars. It’s bad enough that the Growlers currently interrupt the sights and sounds of nature in this park! They also perform sea maneuvers that potentially harm orcas, whales and other marine life. Enough is enough! Do not allow them to further degrade our public lands! Tell them that they will not be allowed to use Deception Pass State park for their climbing maneuvers, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>As a frequent State Park user, please do not allow the Navy to utilize our beautiful parks for training exercises. The Navy has functioned sufficiently without using our State Parks for these activities. State Parks are sanctuaries for people and wildlife. Please keep the military out.</td>
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<tr>
<td>This is a terrible idea. Our parks are not mock war theaters. They are places of peace and beauty and undisturbed nature. We go there for solace, to nurture our souls. Deception Pass is already marred by the Growlers -- which rip apart the sky overhead and drown out conversation. I realize the Navy needs to train, but it must be somewhere else. This is unacceptable.</td>
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<td>Please consider the following— Definition of state park: an area of land that is owned and protected by a U.S. state because of its natural beauty or its importance in history. State parks should serve people in these four ways: 1. By preserving and protecting natural areas of unique or exceptional scenic value not only for the present generation but for generations to come. This is THE most basic service of state parks and it should never be lost sight of.</td>
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Combined Navy Comments- post 12-18-20

2. By providing opportunities for recreational use of natural resources and for outdoor recreation and outdoor living in natural surroundings. Recreation that makes use of natural resources in the outdoors is a definite responsibility of any state park system. Opportunities for camping, fishing, boating, swimming, picnicking and similar types of recreation are a major concern of state park systems.

3. By portraying and explaining plant and animal life, geology and all other natural features included in the various areas in the state park system. In an age when we are faced with ever-dwindling natural resources, this service is very important, because an enlightened public is essential for intelligent use of natural resources.

4. By preserving, protecting and portraying historic and scientific areas of state-wide importance. One of the very important services of a state park system is the preservation of the physical aspects of the state’s history and the interpretation and portrayal of the historical events connected with them. To allow any military branch to use any state park for training purposes does not fit with the purposes of an area set aside for the peoples’ enjoyment. Additionally there must be a balance of the amount of United States Navy encroachment allowed on Whidbey Island. Allowing Navy units to conduct training of any type at Deception Pass State Park greatly exceeds that balance.

I have personally spoken to out-of-state park visitors who were surprised and disturbed by the Growler noise and said they would not return. I am convinced more visitors will be kept away if DPSP is “annexed” by NASWI. Is this the goal of the Washington State Park Service? I did not receive notice regarding the real property agreement between WA State Parks and the Navy until yesterday. I am a property owner on Hood Head across Bywater Bay from Shine Tidelands State Park, which is identified as one of the 29 sites the Navy is considering as a training site. See screenshot below of the area. The northern area marked as Shine Tidelands State Park is Wolfe Property State Park. Please clarify if the Wolfe Property has been incorporated into Shine Tidelands State Park, and if the Navy has plans on to use this site, as well. It would be helpful to receive this information as soon as possible, so we can make appropriate comments by Jan. 6, 2021.

I again write to oppose the use of our State parks by the Navy. It seems inconceivable to me that a public park used by families and other citizens be used to conduct war games, how does that make any sense. The military has plenty of real estate in our State to practice what they must. I completely agree that we should not be conducting training in state parks. The military owns more than enough land to conduct training without having to conduct training and ruin our state parks. The state parks are a place to relax and enjoy the beauty of nature and provide a place for the animals almost undisturbed. There are so few of those places left, we have to protect them and keep them for future generations and preserve the habitat for our animals. Thank you for your efforts and consideration.

I am absolutely oppose to allowing Navy military training in our State Parks. It is against State Parks mission statement and vision statement. State Parks should be a place for the public to find peace and the beauty of nature not for military exercises. Please vote no to the Navy.

As a retired Sailor and current Navy employee I most heartily endorse approval and immediate following steps to allow training at Washington State Parks. I have met few SEALS that I like or agree with. However, they and their mission is an integral part of our foreign policy and domestic safety. The Navy has existed in Washington since well before statehood. Washington has strong maritime roots. Unfortunately some people in the public have created through their political affiliation a negative attitude to all things defense. They often overlook the Yakima Training Center and the bulk of negativity resides on the west side. Together we as residents should all be involved in the defense of the country and prepared for our future. Let’s join and be the gracious but good the Navy accountable to be honorable visitors.
I have concerns about the US Navy training in our Washington State Parks. This appears as an open ended access to our parks. No expiration date and no limits on training events! What extreme danger to our national defense requires this intrusion into our parks? I am doubtful the Navy will be able to mitigate trampling plants, disturbing birds and other wildlife or avoiding contact with the public. Most of us while enjoying our park don't want to encounter an armed person sneaking through the forest or suddenly appearing out of the waters edge. Best intentions for avoiding impacts are easily written but maybe in reality impossible to prevent.

At a minimum there should be only a trial period where impacts can be recorded. Any permits to the Navy should only be good for one year and subject to withdrawal for failure to fulfill pledges for minimum impacts. Even these requirements will put extra burden on Washington St. Park staff if they are to truly monitor impacts to the public and the parks natural features.

I've read information in both the Stanwood/Camano News and the Skagit Valley Herald re use of the parks by the Navy. I am mostly familiar with Camano beaches having walked a number of them. Watching birds and many other creatures that use the water and land and understanding how the Navy intends to train, I believe it's perfectly acceptable for them to use (in particular Camano) state parks for their training.

War Games in State Parks Dear Washington State Parks Commissioners, I'm proud of my city for passing a resolution to reject the Navy's application to conduct war games in our State Parks. Kudos to Langley's City Council and mayor for speaking out for the people and parks of Whidbey. As pointed out in the resolution (https://langleywa.org/CofL%20Res.pdf.), clandestine military training in no way aligns with the mission, vision or core values of Washington State Parks. According to their mission statement, our state parks are intended to be "cherished destinations with natural, cultural, recreational, artistic and interpretive experiences that all Washingtonians enjoy, appreciate and proudly support." They are not intended to be sites for stalking and spying on the public, complete with realistic looking fake weapons. The very reason for visiting our parks - experiencing peace in nature - would be nullified. Why would we feel safe in such an environment? And if I would shun the parks under these circumstances so would visitors to the island. Tourists are drawn here for the natural beauty and then proceed to funnel money into our local economy. Once the word was out, people would no longer frequent the parks, not wanting to be the targets of "clandestine and surveillance" training. The values of the Washington State Parks include "involving the public in our policy development and decision making." Hopefully this resolution by the elected representatives of the citizens of Langley will get your attention. Please listen to the people for whom these parks were intended.

Please keep the military out of our state parks. The parks should used for recreation and space for wildlife to life in peace - not a training ground. There are already so few places for people to escape other people. Please let us enjoy being alone in nature. Being alone doesn't mean having someone hidden from view but still there.

My home borders a Washington State park just outside Port Townsend. I enjoy the park daily, as do many of my neighbors in the Kala Point development. Public sentiment here is strongly in favor of the Navy's proposed use. We are in fact honored to be able to offer our support to the men and women who defend our freedom. While you may find an occasional individual full of bluster and noise who objects to all things military, be assured that is not the majority opinion here.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I support the Navy’s request to use the state parks on Whidbey Island for training. 408</th>
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<tr>
<td>PLEASE do NOT let me the military run these operations! I live on Camino Island and directly across from Penn Cove. The roar of the jets are horrendous. When they are running maneuvers I have to yell for my husband to hear me. My anxiety level has increased and I have found myself literally yelling at the sky when there has been one jet after another. No one can tell me that it has no effects on health. Parks are to be pleasant places to enjoy nature, re-create and a sanctuary for wildlife. These flights will produce the opposite effect. Please do not be taken in by the ‘studies’ that are touted that claim there is no effect on the public and wildlife. I think people in the future will look back on this and shake their heads as this lie will be uncovered but by then the damage will be done. Please protect the parks and the wildlife as well the people you hope will use them. I am living this damage now, I would not wish this on anyone. Say NO! 409</td>
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<tr>
<td>I totally object to using these parks for training. Saying that your training will not impact the environment is bogus. You walk on the ground, swim in the water, climb your rocks, you leave an impact on the environment. Your excessive flying of aircraft is more than enough for me and my community to bear. Flying aircraft at night for hours leaves me sleepless. Now you want to interfere with my parks. No thank you. 410</td>
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<td>WSP since I was a kid has become a law enforcement State Park verses the environmental friendly promoting wilderness Staye park. Therefore I wouldn’t trust them with the phrase used in the into to the issue “ probable significant adverse impact on the environment” that is a very wide open statement. Our military has a large swath of lad they can move troops on and using publicly paid for pard to allow Federer use is not good. What if they do more damage, well we lose that area wether the usage is “probable significant adverse impact on the environment” or not the space will be ruined and will cost us tax payers to sue or just fix it. It’s a lose lose for tax payers and I bet State Parks is just trying to make a buck. In fact I bet they solicited the federal group to come to our parks for money. Not good and brings back problems with my first statement, WSP is more of a Law Enforcement group and for them to make a environmental statement about park usage I think I’d be very cautious. So I say NO, park are for people not military training. The first kid that finds something left behind and they get injuries or killed by it will take all the profit I bet WSP is trying to make on this deal. No don’t give our park to people who say “oh we won’t do that” because in these days if you have to ask, well they end up doing I over 1/2 the time. Please leave parks for people. Sorry for bad grammar I am typing this on a little 1/4 inch box on my screen. Proving again this WSap can even host a Public Comment section correctly so I sure don’t turn the Park Cops to say no the the Federal government. Please don’t give away or clean park to this beside WSP greed this shouldn’t even be a issue. No No No! 411</td>
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<td>If the Navy operations don’t interfere with the other park users and don’t harm the landscape I would think it would be a good thing. I would surmise the Park service will be compensated for the Navy’s use of facilities which would no doubt help the budget! 412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not in favor of any naval training proposed at Washington State Parks. I walk the beaches and forest of Fort Worden and I see wildlife daily trying to navigate human interference. Seals, otters, eagles, local seabirds, migrating seabirds, and other marine animals in the area are already under</td>
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stress and needing the waters to be less populated with humans as they try to hunt, forage and fish.

We cannot allow, as proposed, an additional layer of 11 months of impact to the environment. As a local resident, I can show you where the otters den, and where the eagles frequent and build nests. I know where the kingfishers nest and fish. I can tell you when the loons return in the spring and show up in the winter passing through. They all need the space to fish, but continued disturbance will push them out. Something is still in balance here. The animals are still getting what they need, but the area is getting very popular. People don’t always pick up their dog waste, there’s more swimmers, walkers, dogs than ever. I’m concerned the added naval training will tip the balance and then where will these creatures go? Your proposing a major impact on the wildlife whether you train on the water, the overland, or the forest. Special operations is not a priority, we have larger issues to prepare for in this nation. Perhaps the navy can redirect their training to assist with the COVID pandemic!

Hi as a day hiker and past backpacker I object to the fly overs in national park airspace and in mountains and over native american tribal lands. Last fall I experienced a flyover on gold creek just off I/90. It was defanging! Hundreds of picknickers and day hikers were effected as well as wildlife. The military need does not justify the national mandate and state mandate setting aside land for the peaceful enjoyment of this and subsequent citizens. Quite enjoyment is a primary necessity for national, state, and tribal lands.

I suggest you follow the safety guidelines of the Marine Mammal Stranding Network through NOAA and fish and Wildlife officials. There have been marine mammal deaths before from this kind of Navy training exercises, and it seems like a horrible waste of our natural resources.

I opposed the use of Deception Park as a training location for the US Navy. The Navy and its representatives don’t have our environment in their best interest. They have a history of destroying Islands and leaving behind toxic pollutants in its wake. Smith Island full of inexplosive bombs. The residents of Vieques Island in Puerto Rico. Vieques Island is home to some of the highest sickness rates in the Caribbean. Numbers articles and reports can be found in major USA publications about the the Navy and its destructive history to our land. Please do your research before granting any use of our fragile park and deny any use to the park by the US Navy.

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I approve of letting Navy personnel train on state parks land within the guidelines of the proposed permit. Realistic and dynamic training stimulates enthusiasm among participants and affords priceless learning opportunities. We as citizens, either through lifestyle, apathy or intent, put these people in harms way and they deserve the best training available to them.

As a Navy veteran, and a long time user of the Washington State parks, I must express my strongest objection to the Navy’s acquisition of real property in our state parks. I strongly support the Navy’s mission but when it comes to our state and national parks, that is something that our military should be protecting as one of the many treasures of our national inheritance. These lands are set aside because of their unique beauty and preserved to the best of our ability for the enjoyment of the citizens and their children. Being a veteran I understand the importance of training but I also understand the reason for military service, and in my opinion the Navy’s acquisition of state parks crosses this line and actually violates its purpose. Our state and national parks must be preserved as the inheritance of the American people, free from the domain of corporate and government agendas.

I support the use of WA SP for the Navy. After all, many of these parks where former military properties and acquired by the state for a very nominal price. And yes, WA has put a lot of investment in these parks. Love our parks.

I urgently and passionately object to military exercises being conducted in our State Parks. This world just HAS to work toward a new form of CONFLICT RESOLUTION. The military operations have NO business being inflicted on citizens in the most beautiful areas that have been designated as SACRED
Earth places. It is an abomination to think of using them in this way. I fervently beg you to choose another alternative. 421

The proposal fails to provide adequate detail of specific training and how it impacts state park visitors. It’s noted that training will take place most months of the year including during the high season when day use and campgrounds are full. How could they not impact the public during times of high usage. They apparently have managed to be properly trained for decades without using the State Parks, what has changed? 422

As a former Army officer and a long time user of state parks in Washington and throughout the northwest, I would encourage Washington State Parks to continue to allow the US Navy use state parks for military training exercises in the manner they have proposed. Several of our parks provide unique opportunities to obtain high quality training for Navy personnel in a unique setting and the impact to the public is minimal. Supporting our service members and their ability to receive the best tactical training available is the right thing to do and is something our state parks did back when I was a young ROTC cadet at Eastern Washington University in the 1980’s who trained on multiple occasions in state parks and national wildlife refuges in Spokane County. I applaud our state parks past commitment to our military personnel and their training needs and hope this will continue in the future. 423

Training of Navy personnel should be done in a place where there is no chance of civilians encountering Navy personnel, or vice versa. The idea that the Navy “must” train in public parks and other public lands commonly used by the general public is a falsehood promoted by the Navy for its own convenience. It is short-sighted and ignores the damage to the sound landscape and emotional tenor of the places we all go to rest and regenerate. The argument that having a bunch of uniformed Navy personnel practicing combat scenarios in our public places will not affect the public is either an uncaring lie or stunningly ignorant. I don’t know a single person who thinks that this is a good idea or that the Navy should be allowed to do this. It is not lost on all of us that the decision as to whether or not to allow these activities will not be made by a vote of the public, but by some commissioners who can and will be heavily pressured to allow this violation. Thousands of people have spent tens of thousands of hours trying to protect the public from the abusive bullying by those who fly Growler jets over our heads and we can see what that effort came to ... So I have no doubt that this proposed abuse will be allowed as well. Inch by inch, we lose that for which we say we are fighting. 424

I do not want my state parks used for training Navy training 425

Let the Navy train anywhere they want in our state. I support the US Navy and their need to train. Encourage them to stay and train in WA!!! 426

Do not let them in. I just retired after 21 years of service as a Blackhawk pilot. Special Operators were my primary customers. DOD will lay ruin to any property they are allowed into. This is a slippery slope that will lead to the destruction and pollution of our spatially diverse ecosystems. But if all you need is money. DOD will give you sacks of cash for destroying the jewels of the Pacific Northwest. Do what is right for the people of this state long term and avoid getting into bed with an agency like DOD. 427

Absolutely, let them train! It will have no impact on guests as they are after all..... SEALS 428

I don’t want secret training to spoil my time at parks. The Navy has taken a few of the nicest beaches here on Whidbey Island. Our parks are a place of calm and rejuvenating for my soul. DON’T spoil it. 429

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I have been a resident of Port Townsend since nineteen seventy-four (1974). In that time I’ve seen an ever expanding militarization of the greater Puget Sound/Salish Sea area, from storing nuclear weapons on Indian Island to war planes overflying the once pristine areas of the Olympic Peninsula.
As shown in the following paragraphs, the military and the Navy in particular have very large holdings with a variety of shorelines and terrains that could and should be used for their exercises rather than transgressing on state park land. The Navy needs to learn to 'make do' with what it has just like the rest of us, especially since the entire military effort is misguided; as A.J. Muste has said: “There is no way to peace, Peace is the way.” The proof lies in the fact that every combat operation of the past fifty plus years has been a disaster both for America and the countries where combat took place. Naval Magazine Indian Island... consists of 2,716-acres or 7 square miles* (with several miles of coast line bordering Port Townsend Bay on the west and several more miles of shoreline bordering Kilisut Harbor on the east.) Naval Air Station Whidbey Island... encompasses multiple Navy installations including a seaplane base, Ault Field, Outlying Field Coupeville and Boardman Training Range, making Naval Air Station Whidbey the single largest naval installation in the Pacific Northwest* (NASW also includes significant coastline on Rosario Strait) Naval Station Everett... (waterfront) hosts a couple of destroyers, a buoy tender, an aircraft carrier that operates with nuclear power and three frigates.* Naval Base Kitsap... Created in 2004... (with) The merging of two former naval stations created what is now the 3rd largest Naval Base in the United States Fleet.*

I feel it is our duty to help our Navy personnel train to the highest possible level. This would keep our men and women safer. I am in favor of anything that helps them train. This shows no environmental impact. There is no downside to approving this. Please allow our Navy SEALS to use any and all of our state parks.

To Whom It May Concern: Oour familyl has lived in Skagit County more than 30 years. As citizens who use and enjoy Depception Pass Park and citizens who have two sons in the military we support the scheduled use of the park for Training of Navy SEALs. I undrstand the importance of training to advance readiness, preparedness and skill development in environments that are available during non-public access use. The Navy has sought and used Wa State Parks in the past and this update of the the permission is timely. When trainings are scheduled after hours, the park offers environments that keep skill development high in areas where topography and water access are optimal. I am not opposed to this scheduled use. In fact, having two sons in the military (one son Navy SEAL and one an Army Major) I know the importance of training regularly in environments that are challenging and build real life skills. I heartedly support this update of the relationship of WA State Parks and the US Navy at this time.

Thank you for inviting public comment on the proposed use of Washington State Parks for Naval Training exercises. I am deeply concerned about the impacts of Naval Training in Washington State’s public parks. As a Port Townsend resident, our surrounding area is especially impacted. Our state parks are a remaining source of beauty in nature that should not be compromised. At Fort Worden we have resident eagles, kingfishers, coyotes, deer, and many other species of wildlife that enrich our experience of the natural beauty of the park each day. No matter how you look at it, the Naval exercises are an intrusion. We have already had to live with the Naval jets flying over our airspace on a regular basis. For anyone who has lived through a loud and low flyby, it causes a level of heart-racing panic until once again, you realize it is just Whidbey Island’s jets. Flagler, Townsend, Mystery Bay all provide access to the water and to the natural environment for both local citizens and visitors. During this Covid-restricted year, these areas have remained sanctuaries of stress-free recreation. Social distancing and lots of space for all who want to visit are essential in maintaining wellness. The addition of stealth Naval training is contradictory to the stated
goals of our State’s Parks Commission and has no place in these publicly held spaces where families and individuals can enjoy some respite and renewal. Here is a reminder of your mission and vision. I urge you to stay true to your stated core values.

MISSION & VISION

MISSION
The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission cares for Washington’s most treasured lands, waters, and historic places. State parks connect all Washingtonians to their diverse natural and cultural heritage and provide memorable recreational and educational experiences that enhance their lives.

VISION
Washington’s state parks will be cherished destinations with natural, cultural, recreational, artistic, and interpretive experiences that all Washingtonians enjoy, appreciate, and proudly support.

CORE VALUES
The agency has adopted the following core values:

- Commitment to stewardship that transmits high quality park assets to future generations
- Dedication to outdoor recreation and public enjoyment that welcomes all our citizens to their public parks
- Excellence in all we do
- Involving the public in our policy development and decision making
- Support for one another as we translate our mission into reality

We love our state parks and visit them often. The main attractions for us are the trail systems, allowing us to enjoy the quiet of the forests and the occasional wildlife we see and hear. Now, when we visit a state park, we know that there may be Navy Seals hiding in the bushes. That’s a creepy feeling that can destroy what used to be a special time for us. When we don’t hear birds singing, we know it might be because the Seals have scared them away.

The parks have been created for the enjoyment of the people - not as a playground for the military. Please remove the Navy from the state parks.

This is a bad idea. Is the general public allowed to sneak around on military bases and property? It seems are military wants to practice abducting park goers. This is an unnecessary and creepy idea.

I am strongly opposed to naval special operations training on our Washington state parks. We love our beautiful state parks. We don’t want them ruined for our normal civilian use.

The state parks should be for recreation and the protection of nature. COVID showed us how essential the natural environment is - protecting it, not exploiting it, should be part of our national security plan! Many vital organizations and agencies, not to mention our economy, depended upon meeting out of doors in fresh, breathable, air to survive this past year. We have to protect areas of nature if we’re going to have that available to us. Also, we now know how important it is for animals and people to have separate areas to live. Animals carry viruses we need not to contract! A strong military is of course an unquestioned priority. However so are other aspects of our total national security picture.

The Navy can’t possibly do the type of training they need to do, while still protecting the parks’ environments. Are they going to stick to the trails? Of course not. And to do what they need to do, they will add to erosion, disruption of the plants that create our oxygen, and the intrusions into animal life that shove wild animals into backyards where species who shouldn't mingle, then do.

I also have concerns about military operations in civilian areas. Accidents happen. And all of us - retired or off-duty military personnel definitely included - need time in nature. Time in nature without encountering human-made structures, activities, or priorities.
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<td>One more issue. The comment period for this application should have been much much better publicized. It's pretty clear that the public's opinions are not desired. I saw a story about this in the local paper a few days ago and the deadline is in a few days!</td>
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<td>This seems at considerable odds with the mission and intent of Washington State Parks. What is the public benefit to me, as a regular Parks visitor and supporter, for supporting the proposed activity? Why must this activity take place on lands designated for public enjoyment of the outdoors? I encourage this proposal to be declined by Washington State Parks.</td>
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<td>Training for war in our state parks is a disgusting and frightening idea. Our parks are not to be used as mock war theaters. They are our places of peaceful beauty and are meant to be undisturbed as natural habitats. We go there for comfort and rejuvenation. Deception Pass is already being destroyed by the navy Growlers, speeding overhead with overwhelming and horrifying noise, ruining any attempt at conversation, and frightening animals. I realize the Navy needs to train, but it must be somewhere else.</td>
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<td>I fully support the Navy's proposed use of the state parks for training. I think many of the &quot;public&quot; comments in newspapers and social media are misleading, overtly biased against the military, and are knee-jerk reactions to the current proposal, especially when viewed against the apparent decades of such prior activity without public outcry or comment. By their nature, such activities are surreptitious and if detected by the &quot;public&quot; would constitute a failure of the exercise to be undetected and would then in itself suggest that more training was required. The end of training scenario outlined by RADM Barnett in his letter to you of Dec 4, 2020 should be more than adequate to assuage to concerns of the public. I fully support the Navy training proposal.</td>
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<td>First, leave no trace. I am concerned that the training operations will produce trash / spent equipment and supplies that will scare the public areas, harming the public's right to enjoy these WA State Parks. Years past I have camped in and around the mountain warfare training camp in the Sierra Mountains. I saw trash from the military trainees who used the area. Empty K-ration cans, full K-ration cans, ponchos and other discards that scar the area. I am concerned this will happen here in Washington state as well. What recourse will the public have if these Seal operations harm our public parks?</td>
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<tr>
<td>As a retired US Navy veteran and Washington State resident for over 30 years, I appreciate the thoughtful attention given to this matter by both the US Navy and the State, and am in favor of allowing this training to move forward.</td>
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<td>I fully support the expanded use of Washington State Parks for Naval Special Warfare training. This training will help save the lives of these brave Americans, and others they may be trying to protect or rescue, and is vital to our national security. The cold waters of the Puget Sound and the diverse terrain of our state parks provide unique environments that cannot be replicated anywhere else in the United States. This training has been occurring without incident in five Washington State Parks per agreement with the Parks and Recreation Commission for decades; and I don't understand what has materially changed now to logically and objectively cause such a reversal in support. I sincerely believe that this training will be conducted safely with no adverse impact on the environment or the public. The purpose of the training is to approach land from the water, hide and remain undetected; leaving no trace of their presence. So, frankly I believe it is somewhat ludicrous that the organization that invented the concept of “Leave No Trace” (but not the slogan) is somehow thought to have more of a negative impact on state parks and roads than most regular authorized users.</td>
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You can rest assured that Special Forces training in the state will NOT EVER damage, handle, or harvest marine life for their own amusement without a permit; leave fires smoldering upon departure or create fire pits in unauthorized areas (of course using rocks taken from existing stone walls); drag picnic tables or other non-permanent fixtures across fragile surfaces; drive their vehicles into vehicle-free zones, randomly cut vegetation to improve their view; let their pets run loose/amuck and leave excrement scattered about; carve their initials in old-growth cedars and redwoods, overflow or otherwise jam open wildlife-proof waste receptacles, overload electrical circuits; blast their music across the entire park, hit bystanders with awry balls or Frisbees, and so on and so on.

The Navy will continue to strictly abide by all environmental and safety regulations and will continue to exercise strict training policies to limit unintentional interaction with the public. I would submit that any effort to restrain or prevent Naval Special Warfare training in our state parks must clearly be preceded by a more pressing and meaningful effort by the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission to enforce existing park rules and regulations to substantially curtail such routine abuses by authorized users. In other words, taken in the context of damage and disturbance caused by exiting users on a daily basis, Naval Special Warfare training will have infinitesimally insignificant impact on the condition, availability and usability of our state parks. I ask that the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission unconditionally support this request for expanded training.

Has the Navy considered using Indian Island for their special operations instead of our state parks?

As a long time resident of Washington State, I’ve enjoyed the State Park systems since I was a small child. As a retired Marine Corps officer, I’ve had on occasion meet and work with SEALs. Washington State has some of the most unique and pristine coastline in the United States, which draws hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. This coastline is also idea for training SEALs to conduct their missions.

As the United States military moves away from training and fighting insurgencies in Middle Eastern countries, they are returning to their fundamentals. This include conducting full spectrum warfare against opponents with near equal capabilities to U.S. forces. In order to conduct this type of training, SEALs need the ability to train in all weather and unique and challenging locations. These are the same locations we enjoy at our state parks.

I’ve reviewed the Department of the Navy submissions and responses to questions. Their plan is sound and it serves the best interest of the Nation to allow these training missions to occur. We as a nation count on these young men to be our best and brightest warriors. Let them training in Washington, so they can continue to be one of the finest military forces in the world.

The military should be allowed to train in the parks. If is wasn’t for the training done by our military in WWII in the Oregon Mt area we may have lost the war in Germany and the Alps in Europe. Have for sight not hind site. They need to train in all enviroments so be progressive not regressive. That way more military come home and not in a body bag.

I think it’s a great idea to use State Parks for training Navy Seals, I’m all for it.

I strongly urge WA State Parks to NOT allow the request by the Navy for a large expansion of State Parks to be used for Navy training. It is not appropriate to allow these trainings because the proposed training activities do not directly support the agency mission and because of heightened public concern. State Parks are for the public NOT for military training. Our experience on the Olympic Peninsula with the Whidbey Island Naval Station conducting heightened very loud growler flights, is that we cannot trust the Navy to be responsible and to value public safety and opinion. Please to not permit the new plans.

I honorably request that Washington State Parks NOT allow the U.S. Navy unfettered use of its State Parks in and around Puget Sound for military, special ops. training. Not only is their activity an
invasion of our beautiful state parks for their untold purposes, but one that's been kept secret from state and local officials! I believe that a majority of citizens would reject camping and generally recreating in, OR supporting, WA state parks, knowing the potential for special ops forces to be near them, observing them, frightening or accidentally causing harm (on either side). Sure, the Navy denies 'watching' people. But why keep it all a secret then? And why should our state parks be their primary target for expanding their special ops training KNOWING there are people camping and recreating? It's reckless and beyond safe to think this should exist, let alone, expand.

According to Port Townsend law enforcement, the Navy violated a previous agreement by not notifying authorities of the their war-game presence. Finding out 'after the fact' definitely doesn't make me and my fellow campers and hikers feel safe. So, the question must be asked and answered as to why citizens and local law enforcement/authorities were not given notice? Is the Navy above the law? What then would the Navy willingly admit to having caused severe damage to the environment, wildlife habitat or frightening or harming park goers? A confrontation is inevitable. Should the Navy and the park system have to answer for potential dangers? Yes!

We northwesterners live here because of our many state parks. We love them for the beauty, recreation and communing with nature in a peaceful, respectful manner. This incredible treasure will no longer exist when soldiers take over, hide out, and use humans as unwilling participants. PLEASE protect the citizens’ parks and stop this in its tracks. I believe it is imperative that codes be rewritten to prohibit the Navy’s requested expansion, and to its use of ANY of our state parks for military training.

We support whatever the Navy needs to keep our nation safe. That includes the use of public places and parks for training purposes.

I do not want to give the United States Navy permission to use Washington State Parks as a Training Ground. Letting the Navy use Washington State Parks as a Training Ground will environmentally ruin Washington Parks and create horrible experiences for all future uses of the parks by the Public. The Navy trainees will not be able to ensure that all wild life will be safe from their harm. Please do not accept this proposal and allow the Navy to ruin Our Beautiful and cherished State Parks. Thank you for your consideration.

I am a resident of Port Townsend. I have reviewed your staff’s presentation and the Navy’s presentation--requesting permission to use 28 state parks for training operations--that is posted on your website. I did not see the Navy making any arguments why they need to expand their use of state parks from five to 28. I believe the militarization of state parks is contrary to the purpose of state parks. There is no shortage of federal lands in the Western states where the Navy can train. WA parks should be for the enjoyment and use of Washington residents. These are civilian uses. I strongly oppose to the Navy's unjustified overreach in requesting to use 28 state parks for training. Navy training should be limited to the five parks where they have traditionally been granted access for training.

I am writing to ask that our parks are not used for military exercises. The evidence does suggest that there is a possibility of significant damage and this is a risk we should not be taking with the few protected areas we have. These parks are dear to our communities and essential for conservation. To risk damaging them for these exercises is inexcusable and unacceptable. Please reconsider and ask the navy to conduct these ‘exercises’ somewhere where the risk of damage is lower. We love our parks and want them to be protected. We trust in you to do this.

I am against Parks being used for special training. Fort Warden, Fold Fort Townsend are sanctuaries for visitors during a time of Covid. They provide specific habitat for many animal species. Port Townsend is reliant on the parks for their primary economy Tourism. There would be lasting damage from Navy Special Ops training.
I write in support of the US Navy’s request to have access to additional WA state parks for Navy Seal training in the unique waters of the Puget Sound area. WA has a long history of supporting the Navy and we are fortunate to have them here. They provide a huge economic engine and are excellent neighbors.

I am an ordinary citizen of Washington who loves our state parks. I buy a Discover Pass every year. I strongly oppose the use of our state parks for navy training. The navy has plenty of land that it can use for war games. State parks are set aside for public use and should not be used by the navy for training.

I support the Navy’s request to use State Parks properties for Special Operations training. Please allow the Navy to use the varied geographical, hydrological features for training they cannot get anywhere else.

- They have completed the SEPA process to the satisfaction of State Parks staff.
- They have satisfactorily answered my questions concerning the prevention of accidental interactions with the public.
- They will interact closely with local law enforcement (and Park Rangers, of course) to ensure safety of the public as well as their own.
- Spread out over 28 or 29 parks, their actual point impact over the course of a year (or 5, as the case may be) will be very low.
- And finally, I wanted to make the point that the public suffers from the misapprehension that professional military are like having the Michigan militia or the proud boys running around armed on the beach looking for a fight. Far from it, in fact, they are the opposite. These men and women are professional, accountable, and quite literally the best we’ve got. We should be proud to offer a small, occasional opportunity for them to attain the highest state of readiness.

Hello. I do not support the navy’s proposal to do training in the state parks. These areas need as much protection as possible from human interference. I am concerned that the navy’s interference will have a negative impact on the ecology and creatures that make a home in these parks.

War games and Growlers in our parks? What next, military days versus public days? Exclusion zones for bombings and target practice? Get out and keep out of the decreasing recreational areas we have left.

I am a resident of Jefferson County Washington. I wholeheartedly endorse the use of State Parks for Training by the United States Navy. It would be fair the Navy Compensate the County the amount a State Park would lose being closed on those days but in the end Yes the Navy should be allowed to use those parks.

By ALL agreement, parks are created and funded for OUR pleasure and relaxation! Never can military operations fit your mandate on our behalf. What a sham to pretend our public feedback will effect your decision. Clearly you are allowing the military to usurp your power to act on behalf of the public you are created to serve. Military operations are important ...on THEIR lands. And performing these proposes operations in SECRET? While we are thinking and feeling we are free playing we are being subverted. I question your very RIGHT to permit the military to use our parklands for their purposes. Had I sufficient time and resources, I would use the law to take this to the WA Supreme Court! Please do your duty on the behalf of preserving recreation for recreation!

I oppose militarization of State Parks. Please also remove USO club at Port Townsend.

As a frequent visitor to our woodlands and wildlife areas and someone who supports public land and conservation, I think this is a perfectly acceptable proposal. I believe that our public lands should be open to use by military units for training. Especially small unit tactics and special operations training. The lands offer rare benefits and opportunities that other places cant. I fully believe that this proposal for the use of the land for training should be approved.
I strongly oppose allowing the Navy to perform special operations in Washington state parks. I am a lifetime resident of Washington state and live on the Olympic Peninsula. I do not believe allowing the Navy to do this is in line with WA State Parks state mission: "The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission cares for Washington's most treasured lands, waters, and historic places. State parks connect all Washingtonians to their diverse natural and cultural heritage and provide memorable recreational and educational experiences that enhance their lives."

The Navy does not enhance the lives of the people of Washington.

In the time of covid when more people are using outdoor recreational areas and also trying to maintain social distancing can we really afford to let the military play their little war games in our public spaces per the mitigated determination of non-significance "up to 36 times per year"?

Why is the Navy not required to perform a full environmental impact statement when we have a state endangered bird the Marbled Murrelet using the waters of many of these state parks?

Is it not bad enough that the people of Washington state must live knowing that the naval base on the Kitsap Peninsula houses nuclear submarines? In our very back yards and the very waters that we all know and love? Now we must also see them practicing their little parades in our state parks?

For these and many more reasons, I urge Washington State parks to not give the U.S. Naval Special Warfare Command permission to conduct special operations trainings in our state parks.

I support the U.S. Navy's proposal to train in Washington State Parks.

I strongly oppose the Navy proposal to use State Parks for military exercises i.e. SEAL commando land land-sea stealth operations. This is a "taking" of public lands by the Navy. State parks belong to the people of the State of Washington and should not be taken for military use.

The planned Navy "war games" involve stealth operations - the goal is to not be seen - that will be an invasion of privacy interfering with campers or park visitors or will result in areas of the parks closed to visitors. The possibility of altercations is likely. What happens when peaceful campers engage with SEALs whom the perceive as intruders - possibly armed intruders? What will happen when an individual with an armed PTSD (a gift of military duty) individual comes in contact with a SEAL?

Whidbey Island does have many ex-military with PTSD sheltering in State Parks or on park beaches. In Louisiana an altercation with a SEAL resulted in a sheriff deputy shooting a SEAL who was presumed to be an armed intruder.

The Navy proposal is another example of military encroachment in Whidbey Island. We currently have the "Sound of War" with Growler jets and 100+ decibel noise. We don't need further encroachment through the taking of the people's parks.

I am not in favor of Navy training in our State Parks. Our parks are a sanctuary for wildlife in and on the water. The training can occur on Navy and military bases in our State without impacting our parks.

Thank you for your consideration.

Navy use of state parks for training? Just no. Parks are for citizen use, not military training. The navy already has significant disruptive impact in the Salish Sea with growler noise, marine traffic, and marine wildlife disturbance. The number of parks included in this idea is offensive. You're not planning a simple exercise, you're planning to take over the parks. No.

As a long-time resident of Jefferson County, whose family uses our local parks for quiet and peaceful relaxation nearly every day, I strongly oppose the use of state parkland for military training. The proposal shows no regard for local citizens, who depend on the parks as a refuge from the trials and noises of the day, and as secure places of gentle renewal. Military training there would destroy a whole way of life. Surely the military is charged with enhancing our security, not - as here- with destroying it.
I applaud the Staff’s determination that the proposed Navy action does not have a probable significant adverse impact on the environment. As a Washington State resident, a frequent user of Washington State Parks and a neighbor to one of the parks under consideration, I offer my 100% support for allowing the Navy to use the parks for training. The Navy trainees have used the park I live near for years and have caused no problems for me or my family. I see no reason why the proposed future training will be of any concern to the public or to park management. I fully support allowing the Navy to use my State Parks for training. Please approve the Navy’s request so they can restart their training as soon as possible.  

I strongly oppose honoring the Navy’s request to allow training in WA State Parks in Jefferson County. The scope of the request is outrageous—up to 36 times a year? January through November, in up to 8 week blocks? Where the hell are the local residents, currently leveraging parks as one of the only safe activities to remain sane, supposed to go? Additionally, JeffCo gets no benefit from these exercises, or payment for the use of the parks—maybe if the Navy paid for use on a per-use basis, like everyone else, we could reconsider.

I am writing in response to the Navy’s request to use OUR state parks for their training purposes. I strongly object to this use as it is completely antithetical to the established purpose of our parks to provide a peaceful, quiet, nurturing environment. I as a rightful owner as citizen and taxpayer use these beautiful places regularly to recuperate and regenerate so that I may be of service to my family and community. I find the thought of having to be looking over my shoulder for soldiers in uniforms carrying weapons, even if fake, while in a park to be totally contrary to my use of my park. I find this to be especially true as our parks have become extremely important as a safe place to be during the stressed times of the pandemic. I say NO.

I object to any reduction of the open space available for the community to walk and spend time outdoors - all the more so during this pandemic. The Navy has plenty of space allotted to it by the DoD. Exercise there - and leave the civilian spaces to the people ostensibly being protected by our various military forces.

Support the use of state parks by the US Navy for training purposes.

I have many concerns about the proposed training. Following are my objections to the proposal and to the inclusion of specific parks. Then I've included a list of requests for further study and consideration:

Objections
1. First and foremost, the parks are a resource for citizens of Washington State, funded by citizens here. The core values of the Washington State Parks include "Dedication to outdoor recreation and public enjoyment that welcomes all our citizens to their public parks." The proposed trainings would interfere with those values, barring people from witnessing the maneuvers on public lands.
2. The proposal treats all parks the same, saying there would be no impact. That would not hold up to closer investigation and analysis, analysis completely lacking in the proposal. For example, Deception Pass had more than three million visitors in 2019. Any limits on parking or restricted areas for trainings would have a major impact. Other parks are very small and would sustain environmental damage from the proposed activities. Fort Warden is both small and received over a million visitors in 2019. There is nowhere to do a navel exercise there without closing a major portion of the park.
3. There should be much more time and advertisement for comments about this proposal. I saw very little in local media. People and media are currently distracted by the COVID pandemic. Citizens need notification and more time to comment.

REQUESTS:
1. Deny the Navy's request for training. These parks are Washington State treasures and should not be taken over by the U.S. Military.
2. If you do proceed, provide detailed environmental impact statements for each individual park, taking into account usage, conditions, parking, impact on plant and animal life. The current assessment is vague, inaccurate, and lacking in any specific analysis. In addition, it contradicts itself by saying that it would both insist that no civilians witness the training and that the training would have no effects on park users.

3. Extend the comment period. Provide all park users (for example those who hold yearly permits), local media, and social media information about the Navy’s training proposal.

Thank you for your consideration. The public lands must remain in the hands of the public, not the military.

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I am opposed to the use of our state parks for Naval Operations Training. There’s more than enough federal lands that can be used that using our state parks should not even be a consideration. Especially during covid when hopefully more people are getting out to our parks to enjoy the outdoors where it is easier to socially distance.

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I am a concerned citizen who does NOT want the navy using our state parks in any way. The parks are provided for public use and recreation and wildlife habitat. Allowing the Navy to use the parks does not align with the purpose of state parks.

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Do NOT allow the Navy to train in any of the Washington State parks. This is a bad idea for so many reasons which are being articulated to you in many other comments. My purpose here is for you to acknowledge my NON agreement with this proposal. The Navy already owns and controls much real estate; I do not need to list the real estate assets available to this entity as it is already known to them. There is already plenty of land available for the Navy to conduct trainings; the parks should NOT be used for this purpose now or ever.

This proposal is the wrong way to use our state parks the US government has enough areas to train. Keep out of our state parks.

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I do not agree that there will be insignificant impact in State Park areas by conducting this training. State Parks are not appropriate places for the Navy to conduct training.

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I support military training in our state parks.

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I am strongly opposed to the proposal to allow the Navy to conduct training in Washington State Parks. I do not believe this is an appropriate use of state lands, period. Our parks should be available for recreational uses and to preserve the amazing diversity of flora and fauna on the Olympic Peninsula. I believe Navy training is fundamentally incompatible with these uses and should not be permitted.

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I am opposed to the use of public state parks for Naval training exercises. This is not what the parks are intended for. They are intended for the public to enjoy the natural world. I am also not happy with the use of the airways over parks (Deception Pass in particular) for jet and helicopter trainings. This is extremely disruptive to campers and to the creatures who live in the parks. No more intrusion into the state parks!

Absolutely NOT!!!!! Do NOT allow the Navy to use any public space and parks for training. Anyone with post traumatic stress and a variety of other things would be traumatized if at the park and see armed or unarmed military training. And even if they would only do it when the parks closed, that could mean more park closures and citizens not being able to use public parks during those times. I vehemently disagree. Do not allow this.

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I strongly oppose the use of our state park lands for seal activities. The parks are a place to be with friends and family, relax, escape, be still, quiet and enjoy nature. These parks are for regeneration of the soul not a reminder of the stresses in our world. It's bad enough that we constantly have growlers and navy operation near us in Sequim. The noise from the growlers have so effected our dog she is on Prozac for anxiety. When a growler goes overhead she hides in the dark laundry room. How sad that I


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<td>won’t be able to take her camping in Washington State anymore. We currently have reservations for Grayland and Dosewallips. We’re not going o Flager this year with our friends because of the jets and our dog. I guess we may have to cancel our other reservations too. In all honesty even though we’ve been residents of Washington State for many decades, we never went to any of the beautiful beaches on the southern coast because of the driving. We never could relax and let our kids play on the beach because of the traffic. For over twenty years several of the Oregon coast state parks got our patronage and local economies benefited from our tourism dollars. Now that our children are grown we had hoped to support Washington State parks and their local economies. However if this plan goes through, again we will be taking our beach vacations to Oregon. If you must have seal activity at least limit it to just Island county parks as they are already negatively impacted by the military and are useless for camping. Do not allow seal activity on the peninsula nor on the beaches in Pacific county. It will affect negatively affect park attendance and local economies from loss of revenue. As far as I’m concerned Washington State parks will become military training grounds and no longer desirable. What a shame.</td>
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<td>This is the worst idea I’ve ever heard. It’s absolutely the antithesis of our State Parks’ Mission Statement. I’m astonished it is necessary for me to make this comment. You should be fighting tooth and nail to protect the peace and serenity of our public spaces, not inviting COMBAT EXERCISES. Utter insanity.</td>
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<td>Please do not approve the Navy training proposal. I live in Coupeville and love and use all of the parks on the island. What the Navy is describing is invasive and scary. I realize that the Navy needs to train but not in public spaces with civilians and children.</td>
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<td>Absolutely the Navy should use the parks for training but most especially the old forts that were purpose built for it. I’m a little surprised that when the military handed the parks over 60-70 years ago (?) to the State of Washington, that there was not language in the agreement that if the military needed to use the parks that of course they would/should. The taxpayers already paid for those parks to be military installations. And of course we want to support these men and women in their training - they are putting their lives on the line to protect us! These courageous individuals are someone’s son or daughter, husband, wife, mom or dad. We want them to be trained well! Thank you for your service and sacrifice.</td>
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<td>I write to add my voice to those asking you to respectfully deny the military access to our parks for clandestine war practice. Of course I want our troops to practice the skills they need to protect our country. I also feel that protection and respect for citizens begins at home. This is our home; we use our parks for solitary walks as well as family gatherings with small children. I encourage the Navy and other military departments to be responsible both to us and the training of their forces by creating their own training grounds. We citizens contribute large amounts of our taxes to give them the means to do so. An added bonus would be their preserving more forest and shore areas as they kept their training forests and fields from development.</td>
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<td>State park users should not be required to become military props as a condition of entry and use of our parks, and should never be exposed to potential danger or liability while using our parks. Accordingly, I implore you to reject this Navy request and to restore all of our state parks to civilian use only.</td>
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<td>Please reject the Navy’s application to conduct war games in our state parks. How can we enjoy our parks knowing there may an exercise of military personal lurking about? How do we protect the very reason we enjoy the parks. The Navy will disturb our enjoyment and disrupt the environment where wild life resides. This concern is not about liking the Navy, it is about the Navy’s intrusion into our communities and parks. Please protect our parks!</td>
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**Please do not allow the military to use our state parks for training.**

Please do not allow military surveillance in our parks! We are friendly and kind and love that we have places to go and find refuge in nature. It would severely hamper our enjoyment if we were always thinking someone was spying on us. Looking at us, looking over our shoulder. If your mother’s or sister’s were camping in the parks would you want military men spying on them?

I oppose the siting of military operations in state parks. Period.

Please, please make them stop!!!!!!!!

I write to support and underscore the Langley City Council’s resolution asking the Washington State Parks Commission to deny the Navy’s application to carry on war games in Washington State Parks. Our Parks are intended for people to enjoy relaxation and rejuvenation in a peaceful setting. It would be a shame to cast a different quality or purpose than the true peaceful design for these natural parks.

Read your mission statements. Think about what is being proposed: military war games in public recreation areas. Really?

Stop all thought and action about military training in parks.

Military training and public recreation does NOT mix!!!!

I am writing to ask that you reject the U.S. Navy application to conduct military training at our WA State Parks. Military training in our parks goes directly against the purpose of our parks, which is to “care for Washington’s most treasured lands, waters, and historic places, connect all Washingtonians to their diverse natural and cultural heritage and provide memorable recreational and educational experiences that enhance their lives.” (https://parks.state.wa.us/176/Mission-vision)

Military training has no place in our public state parks and will only detract from their value as places of healthy recreation and enjoyment. Please do not take this away from us, especially now, when outdoor space is greatly needed and valued for the solace and comfort it brings during this difficult period in our history.

The Navy already has land set aside for military training use and has already been increasing its presence in our natural, public spaces with the increased noise and flight training. This is already a huge detriment to those who use the parks and those who choose not to because of the noise.

Please do not let the Navy continue to push for even more presence in our pristine, precious, public spaces. Allowing the Navy to conduct wargames in our state parks will only serve to diminish the quality of experience our parks provide while inviting continual pushback, complaints, and litigation from the public. Washington State Parks and military training operations are simply not a good mix.

**QUESTION:**

Greetings, we have no objection to the Navy using our parks and think it would be a very patriotic agreement between Parks and Navy and would make us proud. However just wondering will Parks be charging the Navy to use the parks each time they do a training exercise on Park property? I understand Navy is paying for the SEPA process, but how about a user fee? Parks charges us to use the parks, so it would only be fair for the Navy to pay to use the parks too.

I am writing to register my opposition to the plan to have the Navy conduct trainings in State Parks. I frequently use the parks and am concerned that trainings will result in closure and damage to sensitive natural areas.

At a time when getting out in nature is one of the few safe ways to break the monotony of staying at home, and when more and more people are seeking the refuge of the wilderness, it makes no sense to restrict access for training that could most likely happen on Navy-owned property. Skagit and Island County residents already suffer the noise pollution from Navy jets flying over populated areas at all hours of the day. Do they need really to commandeer our state parks, too?
I would gladly pay more in access fees and taxes to ensure that access to our public lands remains with the public. I respectfully implore you, please do not allow Navy Training in our beautiful, beloved State Parks. These are precious places that according to the WA State Park mission statement are meant to provide “memorable recreational and educational experiences that enhance lives.” With the Navy performing practice operations they’ll instead become places of fear and exclusivity for the military. Family recreation, clandestine war maneuvers and military practice clearly don’t mix. This is not what our parks are meant for. Please continue to uphold the current State Park values to be “cherished destinations with natural, cultural, recreational, artistic, and interpretive experiences that all Washingtonians enjoy, appreciate, and proudly support.” I go to a State Park a couple times a week to exercise, connect with nature, and find a little peace. I very often see a local group of school children who are there at least 4 days per week. If there was the potential to cross paths with Navy members, these places would simply be inhospitable to the public. Please, please uphold the State Parks’ mission and core values.

I respectfully request that the Commission not allow the US Naval Special Operations to use Washington State Parks to conduct special surveillance training. Such use of any state park is in conflict with the defined purpose of these parks. I understand that state parks are tracts of land set aside for conservation of significant ecosystems, significant landforms, important natural phenomena and significant cultural entities. In addition, within the constraints of the conservation aims above, these lands are specifically designated for the democratic right of all members of the public to use for personal enjoyment. Furthermore they provide unique opportunities for scientific research essential for furthering knowledge of the natural environment. Clearly, the purpose of the planned Naval exercises do not comport with any of these objectives. If allowed to proceed this activity will certainly damage the very natural resources that the parks have been established to preserve. The presence of Navel personnel will impede the rightful pursuit of the public to use these areas. Resulting perturbation and damage to the environment will compromise any ongoing and future scientific research.

On Nov. 19th, I had the opportunity to hear the US Navy’s presentation on why they should be allowed to use 29 Washington State Parks, including those on Whidbey Island, for military training of Navy Seals. They would approach the parks on Whidbey by water, using mini electric submersibles, in teams of 8 to 12 personnel. This could happen anytime during the year, day or night. They would be carrying lifelike fake weapons. The goal is to land, fade into the surroundings undetected and observe the area, including the people using the parks, for one to two days. They call it, “clandestine approach and surveillance”, training. I’m a six year military veteran and know the need for training. In fact, the last two years of my service were here in Puget Sound. I trained other military personnel in the use of watercraft, how to make landings, and how to read the tides, underwater terrain and currents of this area. We were based on Indian Island, across from Port Townsend, and near Whidbey Island. Our current military owns 46 miles of waterfront property; we used in our training along with a couple remote islands that are only accessible by water. There are nine of these islands within easy travel time of North Whidbey. You have to ask yourself, why do they need to use the state parks that people are using? Why not train to observe other trained military personnel instead of public citizens? All of the War Games, we trained in during my six years of service, involved trained actions against other military personnel. It’s much harder to use, “clandestine approach and surveillance”, against trained military. In the types of training I participated in, we used live blank ammunition, so you heard...
a gunshot, plus if detection happens, you got actual responses, instead of unsuspecting tourists, campers, or hikers confused by their discovery. When Washington State residents and visitors, even from Canada, choose to hike, boat, and camp in our state parks, they haven’t agreed to participate in this clandestine training. Will they be concerned about their safety and privacy and choose to spend their time and tourist dollars elsewhere? The elephant in the room is, The Navy violated the terms of a previous right of entry permit, when it did not notify local law enforcement, as specifically required, before previous war game trainings in WA. State Parks, and the Navy admits plainclothes officers have deployed in unmarked cars within WA. State Parks, during training and have interacted in face to face conversations with Park guests, while not disclosing their role in an active war game training. So, if this training, planned for state parks that allow day and overnight use, is safe for the public, why does the Navy disavow all liability for injury to the public or any damage to the park? If the public suffered any injury or damage to their property, their only recourse would be to sue the federal government. Please say NO to this request by the Navy to use our Wash State Public Parks for this kind of training.

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<tr>
<td>I was just writing to let you know I support the Navy’s use of state parks on Whidbey Island for training.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Without repeating the reasons for excluding the navy from the parks which I’m sure you’re familiar with by now, I would simply like to state my opposition to the navy using the parks as a simulated war zone. Please oppose this usage.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am opposed to the Navy, a war making, people killing operation, doing any training in public state or federal parks in the state of washington.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Please do not allow the navy to conduct clandestine maneuvers in Whidbey Island State Parks. These parks are for the public to use. Why can’t the Navy conduct maneuvers on their own property? I am not anti-Navy, but the increasing flights and growler noise are already too much without invading our public parks.</td>
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<td>I am in opposition to the proposed war games to be conducted on coastal Washington state parks. The potential risk of altercation and certain damage to the protected environment are unacceptable. This operation would stand is stark defiance of the stated mission of the parks department.</td>
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<td>I am strongly opposed to the use of our state parks for military exercises. These activities are in absolute contradiction of the intention and purpose of our parks. Their negative impact on our enjoyment of the parks extends far beyond the time they are actually taking place.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have just learned about the military wanting to train in our state parks. I am totally against this idea. Parks should be used for peaceful enjoyment of our citizens.</td>
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<tr>
<td>We pay for WA state parks for our rejuvenation. The Navy has already ruined Deception Pass and Ebey’s Landing with their flyovers. Please don’t let them into 28 more state parks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Please say a resounding “NO!” to the US Navy’s proposal to use Washington State Parks for training maneuvers. It is such a bad idea on so many levels. The public use, for which these parks are for, would be greatly hampered by the presence of Naval training. Why not encourage them to use their own bases like Indian Island and Oak Harbor instead of infringing on Fort Worden and Ebbeys Landing? It’s bad enough that we have to endure the noise pollution caused by their jets. I do not want anymore infringement by the military in this area.</td>
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<td>Please record my personal public comment as STRONGLY OPPOSED. Consider the times we are in and our “New Normal;” as the “old normal” will never return.</td>
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As U.S. citizens we desperately NEED our parks, and we need them to be places of refuge and recreation. This has been abundantly demonstrated in the increased park usage since March 2020. Some seek family recreation; others seek quiet, peacefulness and the calm of nature. Having the unnatural, ear shattering blast of Navy jets already intruding on our senses, we do not need further intrusion of military presence in our lives.

I realize you are considering "environmental impact." Human presence in parks IS environmental impact. Let the human presence remain for those who seek out parks for their intended purpose, not for Military Training.

The military has long over-reached, but this is too much. Parks are For The People! Please keep military training OUT of our Parks!

Almost exactly five years ago, I wrote a letter to the Navy decrying their proposal to use our area parks for military maneuvers. Now I learn that the WA St. Parks Department granted permission for such activity and is on the verge of renewing that permission.

It seems to me totally insane to allow our beautiful public parks to be militarized! Living in Port Townsend, I am aware of the heavy daily use of Fort Worden. During this time of pandemic, it is an especially welcome place for walking. During more normal times, it is a hive of activity in all seasons, at all times. How bizarre to think that military personnel might be hiding in the bushes or trying to arrive stealthily on the beach by the Marine Science Center or lighthouse.

How can you allow the Navy to do this? Why are their own substantial reserves not sufficient for these exercises? Why bring war training into populated areas? Your mission is to "care for Washington’s most treasured lands, waters, and historic places." That is NOT compatible with allowing those very places to be used for military training.

Furthermore, the Navy cannot be trusted to follow any limits put on their activities in the parks. Earlier, they agreed to notify local law enforcement of any war games trainings in state parks. They did not. In addition, the Navy has refused to indemnify Washington State Parks or local jurisdictions from possible damages or injuries caused by their activities.

I implore you to preserve Washington’s parks as oases of beauty and enjoyment. Say NO to the Navy!

As a long time resident of South Fidalgo Island (32 years) I can tell you something you already know: Deception Pass State Park is busy. All day, every day since Covid. I regularly hike in and around the Park as do many others. The bridge is a high volume destination spot, and visitors can't help but be intrigued by the park and plan a return visit to explore more of it. I also frequently experience invasive, deafening jet noise. The Navy already impacts our pristine forest in an unpleasant way. I am not in favor of increasing that impact to the point where parts of the park would probably be closed. I understand the needs of the military, I only wish they could be fulfilled somewhere other than this beautiful island.

I oppose offering Deception Pass State Park as a training facility for the Navy.

I do NOT consent to having military people sneaking around in our parks. They can pay their fees and reserve a camp site like everyone else. Any special forces people over 65 get the usual senior discount. Disabled too.

Who gets in trouble if I see someone sneaking around my camp at three in the morning and bash them on the head? Or they bash me because I threatened them. Guys in black sneaking around in the dark? Sounds like a child molester to me. I don't want children feeling endangered if they want to play in the dark. “Be careful there are strangers out there.” Nice park experience, hey?

How about when I up anchor in the wee hours because of changing weather? Do the international rules of the road not apply? Are they exempt from showing navigation lights? Even the nuclear subs are required to show a light. No exceptions.
Let them “attack” the Bangor sub base where they might actually find some difficulties and NOT practice warfare on me. This whole practice is just wrong headed, stupid, dangerous and illegal. I call for rescinding the permissions in the parks they are invading now. Let them play cowboys and indians somewhere else.¹¹⁶

You have got to be kidding? It’s bad enough that there are any State Parks used for Special Ops training. Now you want to quadruple it?? The vision statement of Washington State Parks states that OUR parks “will be cherished destinations with natural, cultural, recreational, artistic experiences that all Washingtonians enjoy, appreciate and proudly support.” How can a family do any of that when they may be accosted at any moment by military personnel suddenly barging into their picnic or quiet hike or popping over the rim at Deception Pass ... heck anywhere.

The citizens of this state have purchased and cared for these lands for one purpose - the ENJOYMENT of those citizens. The military has somehow been able for a century to adequately train their troops in the land THEY own. Why should you give them the run of OURS? It is bad enough that they have destroyed our quiet with their Growlers, now I have to fear that in taking my grandchildren to a State Park that they may have nightmares for life? That I may have nightmares right along with them? All because you have not protected the whole reason for having State Parks in the first place. Just as they run roughshod over our airspace and our ears, what is to say they will not do the same with our lands? Who will protect US while they are in our parks? Whose money will clean up after them? Can you even put a dollar value on the damage they will do?

These are CIVILIAN lands. Please to not give them to the military to destroy for the rest of us.¹¹⁷

I am writing to say that I adamantly oppose the Navy’s plan to insert trainees into the parks to observe and stalk simulated human targets – us. The Navy specifically wants to use our parks, instead of their own military reservations, because they want to use civilians as props. This is completely UNACCEPTABLE. Our state parks are for peaceful civilian use and are essential for public health, especially now with the Covid pandemic. Congress has provided the military with millions of acres reserved solely for training purposes. Putting military trainees, with realistic looking weaponry, in close proximity to unaware civilians is a recipe for deadly conflict. In North Carolina a deputy sheriff killed one and seriously wounded another military trainee in a similar situation. And who pays in the event of a tragedy? We do. In the North Carolina case the local county had to pay out $750,000 in damages. Our state and local governments are already under dire financial distress. Our parks must remain civilian. This is a terrible idea. Please reconsider this proposal.¹¹⁸

Please amend the Revised Code of Washington RCW 79A.05.030 to prohibit military training in Washington State Parks with the following wording:

“(a) No concession or lease shall be granted for military training or exercises by any governmental agency, civilian or military, unless the training is for the purpose of search and rescue, or provision of emergency services.”¹¹⁹

I am writing to provide comments on the SEPA Checklist and Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance for the proposed use of public State Parks in Western Washington for use as military training facilities by the Navy. After reviewing the relevant documents and comparing them with the Parks and Recreation Commission’s 2021-31 Strategic Plan, I can find no evidence that the proposed use is consistent with the currently stated mission, vision, goals or strategies for State Parks. In addition, the needed mitigations to ensure that there are no impacts from the proposed activities are so extensive, as well as largely unenforceable, that it begs the question as to whether the activity truly will be able to avoid impacts. Based on this analysis (attached), I respectfully request that the Commission deny the application for the permit that the Navy is seeking that would allow them to conduct special operations training in Western Washington State Parks.²²⁰
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<th>I strongly object to the Navy using state parks for training purposes. My husband and I walk in the state parks and the thought that Navy personnel may be in the parks and we may encounter them is horrifying. I have personally been horrified by the noise from the Growler jets and don’t think the Navy respects the interests of Peninsula residents. I fear the Navy would disregard the needs of the citizens if it was given an extension of their permission to use state parks.</th>
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<tr>
<td>I am writing to you to urge you strongly to not let the US military use any of our Washington parks for military purposes! That is NOT what they are for.</td>
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<td>Last year I sent an email opposing the Navy’s use of State park land for military training. I’m dismayed that the Navy continues to press for the use of State parks, including five parks in Jefferson County where I have resided for the past thirty years. My objection is based on unmitigated impacts of park land, including the environment and animals that will certainly be harmed. There is also the troubling impact that could happen to the public, for whom the parks belong. Many people go to the parks for peace and tranquility. Children, people with mental health issues, elderly and others are at risk from a potentially traumatic experience exposed to military training. I ask that you do everything in your power to insure that none of our State parks are used for military training.</td>
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<td>I am writing to express my feelings about the US Navy conducting drills, maneuvers, training, etc. in Washington State Parks. I have expressed my opinions in letters to the Navy in years past without ever receiving a response, so now I am writing to you. I understand that these agreements have been in place for over a decade. And that the authorization to conduct such activities has to be renewed on a periodic basis. And that a date for a renewal is in the near future. First let me tell you a little about myself. I am a retired individual in my mid ’70’s, born, raised, and have lived most of my life in Washington State. I was introduced to camping in our state parks by my parents in the early 1950’s, back when most campers used tents and cooked meals on open fires. I grew up loving our parks and even once considered studying forestry and becoming a park ranger. But in the mid ’60’s, Uncle Sam called and I signed up for 4 years in the US Coast Guard. Without boring you too much, my entire life I have enjoyed our Washington State Parks system. I have volunteered under the “Friends” program in the parks, built trails, cleaned campgrounds in preparation for opening of the season. I have purchased a Discovery Pass since its inception, and have always participated in checking the box on my car tabs for my 3 vehicles to support parks. And I have even sported a Washington State Parks custom License Plate on my truck for the last decade. So you get the drift that I love and support our parks. They are one of the greatest gifts for Washingtonians as well as out of state users. But, I have a real hard time in supporting the US Navy using our parks for their training. It just does not fit well with our parks. I understand that the Navy is supposed to notify local law enforcement when they will be operating in parks, and this has not always been the case. I am not aware of any confrontations to date, between civilians and the military, but that is not to say it has not occurred. I have friends that their property abuts a boat ramp where the Navy has used for their trainings. The Navy has ample properties in the Northwest, on the water or not that can be used for their training and that is where it should be conducted, not in Washington State Parks. I urge you to give this serious thought and to not renew agreements with the military for any kind of use of our state parks.</td>
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| My name is [REDACTED] and I am a third generation resident of Coupeville, home of the Ebey’s Prairie National Historical Reserve and two Washington State Parks: Fort Casey State Park and Fort Ebey’s State Park. I am well versed in the ‘talking points’ regarding public concerns that you have had the opportunity to review, sent by so many residents in communities that would be impacted throughout our region by
the US Naval Warfare Command request. I am writing to share my perceptions, as a community member of Ebey’s Reserve for 74 years, of the damage that would occur if the NSWC were to succeed in being granted permission to implement this highly controversial and destructive action in 28 State Parks throughout the State of Washington.

When I grew up, our State Parks were abandoned forts that offered my friends and me open access to the infrastructure and surrounding landscape. For years we played hide and seek in the underground tunnels and rooms at Fort Casey. It was dark in there and the echoes of our voices filled the air. Sometimes we were quiet and leaned against the wall awaiting other people to walk through, and then jump out and said boo. As a teenager, with a little Honda 50 motorcycle my friends and I loved racing up the steep hill at Fort Ebey and congratulated ourselves for not falling into the concrete pits where the firearms had been sited. (see attachment)

Ultimately our playgrounds became State Parks. For that we felt honored, honored that our history and these artifacts were so valued and now protected for all time. There would be no destruction of the forts, no denigration of the property, no private ownership bringing growth. These historic properties were secure and open for all to visit, to experience not only the history and serenity, but the beauty of the land and Puget Sound.

This has been a valued opportunity for many years for hundreds of thousands of people, both local and visitors from all over the state, the country and the world. It is really quite unbelievable that turning our State Parks into a military war training zone could even be up for consideration. These are publicly owned lands that citizens deserve to visit without being surrounded by secretive military war training. It is scary, it is violent and has no place there. Additionally, Coupeville derives much of its economy from tourism which will surely decline under such circumstances. Such tactics are the antithesis of the purpose and mission of State Parks. As with the OLF field in Coupeville, home to the F18 touch and go Navy training that has devastated our quality of life, the Navy HAS many other options when it comes to where these activities can take place. They don’t want to. This is wrong, the military exists to protect American citizens; why should they be permitted to cause harm and not go out of their preferred way to conduct their training?

I respectfully, and adamantly, ask that you protect our Washington State Parks, our citizens, our towns, our economy, and the the values that have provided us with such exceptional landscapes dedicated to history and providing people with the opportunity to experience peace and nature.

what did the Parks determine about the Navy wanting to expand their operations from 5 parks to 28 parks? Any negotiations or determinations yet? I hope the Parks say NO to any permits for the Navy. They already own enough land to use for their operations.

I strongly oppose the use of Washington State Parks for warfare training. Let the US Navy train on its own lands. Our state parks are designed and maintained for public, civilian recreation and need to be maintained as such.

I frequently hike in a local state park, and it would be extremely disconcerting to have armed members of the military conducting operations in the park. This is not what state parks were intended for. Please find places to train where the public will not be impacted.

We are supporter of WA State Parks with our family purchasing 3 state passes annually for our multi-generational family. A number of the 28 parks being considered for expanded NSO training are parks we fairly frequently use annually including on Whidbey Island, Camano Island, and the Sequim area. We are opposed to the expansion of the NSO training beyond the parks that are already in use. Knowing that this training could be occurring at a park we might visit with our grandchildren will be an obstacle to our visits. Creating such an expansion will definitely make us reconsider our contributions to the parks as well as greatly diminish our use of the parks. These parks are supposed to be for the enjoyment of WA residents and visitors to our state and not for the U.S. Navy to engage in their military exercises.
I'm writing to express my strong disapproval of the proposed unannounced Special Reconnaissance in Washington State Parks. These parks are a special and unique asset for we Wash. State citizens to remove ourselves from the complexities of modern times and appreciate the wonder of nature in a quiet and contemplative environment. Having Defense Dept personnel out there training and running around would be totally counter to this experience which we are now afforded. Such military training does not belong in that special environment. The Defense Dept has vast amount of land and opportunities to conduct their training already - they certainly do not need to encroach on OUR Land destroy our appreciation of what the State Parks has to offer.

There is no compelling rationale in the NSWC proposal to justify expansion of Navy Special Operations warfare training exercises from 5 WA State Parks which has been the maximum in the past, to the proposed 28 WA State Parks. The parks could be used for NSO training year round. NSO use of air and submarine drones equipped with surveillance equipment provide no guarantee that the public will not be surveilled while in the parks. UUV - Unmanned Underwater Vehicles (submarine drones) and UAV Unmanned Air Vehicle (flying drones) will be used in the training according to the NSO proposal document.

As many as 84 trainees and staff for 72 hours per training (max) and up to 36 times per year at each park. This will likely have a significant impact on park going public as well as plants, aquatic, birds and animal life.

Trainees may be concealed 'hiding out' in the park lands for up to 48 hours at a time and could be allowed within 500 ft of public camping sites.

NSWC has written into the 5 year proposal the option to extend it by another 3 - 5 years. Essentially it's a 10 year proposal.

Why would we be using any state parks for this purpose now when the Navy has 79,000 acres of land and 42 miles of coastline as well as numerous agreements with private property, land holders?

My husband and I are firmly against using the State Parks for military training. Not only is this highly disruptive to local residents who find these places of refuge essential during a pandemic, when we must limit our activities, but those training sessions will also disturb wildlife and birds, including high-priority species.

While we are greatly opposed to any use of the parks for military purposes, if you feel you cannot completely refuse, your approval should be limited to a two-week period in which no birds are nesting, and with far fewer sessions than proposed.

We strongly support the request by the Navy to conduct special operations training at 28 state parks. Please grant them any and all access they require for training.

I am writing to strongly object to any military use of the state parks. State parks are a place of rest, discovery, and inspiration. They are not places for people training to inflict violence on others.

I have seen the negative effects of the military in action and their lack of consideration to the communities they impact. I live on Whidbey Island and have seen the callous disregard the US Navy has displayed to even listening to local voices about the impact their jets have on communities and families.

I do not believe any military branch needs to use state parks. My guess is they are choosing these locations because of convenience and low cost. Let us raise taxes to support an expanded military training in locations that do not impact state parks.

If the state parks need funds, let us go about the proper way of raising funds: entrance fees, taxation, and group support through donations.

In this time of COVID, with more people going to state parks, let us channel that energy to make our parks better and keep the military out.
Please note that I am opposed to allowing clandestine (or overt) military operations in our state parks. As a Washington native I hold our state parks dear. I visit, hike, camp and walk in our parks often, my husband almost daily. There would be no worse use of our national heritage than military practice. The military owns huge swaths of our state already. Let them practice there.\textsuperscript{535}

I am writing to oppose ANY use of our state parks by the military for any reason. Our state parks are public places for our citizens to enjoy and use for recreational activities. The military has millions of acres set aside exclusively for THEIR use, their training and their war games. Why do they need to use our public spaces? Exactly! There is no reason whatsoever.

Please do the right thing and block this insane plan.\textsuperscript{536}

As residents and taxpayers of Washington state, we wish to state our strong opposition to allowing the US military to use our state parks for training purposes. Our state parks belong to the people of the state of Washington to enjoy the serenity of nature, to recreate in and to learn about the natural environment. Our state parks are essential to the mental and physical health of many of our Washington state residents. The state parks are places where we can exercise while socially distant, observe nature and enjoy the solitude. We are frequent users of different state parks. We would find it terrifying to have an armed military in close proximity to us while walking in the state park. It would damage our mental health.

The military in the state park is a recipe for a tragedy. Please do not allow the military to use our state parks for training.\textsuperscript{537}

I support the Navy Training proposal to continue to train in our state parks. Since these state parks are public parks and our U.S. military is part of the public, we should wholeheartedly endorse our Navy’s training regimen within reasonable boundaries. I truly do not understand the un-American and unpatriotic folks who love their liberty and freedom and yet have no idea of the sacrifices required to protect our republic from socialist as well as fascists oppressors. The U.S. military needs to train in the U.S. since China, Russia, and North Korea for example won’t let us train there.\textsuperscript{538}

I’m writing to ask that you do not allow the U.S. Navy to conduct training operations in our sacred state parks. As a Pacific Northwest native, I’ve grown up in these beautiful lands that are defined by the mountains, waters and beaches that line the Northwest. Some of my greatest memories have taken shape in our state’s parks and I believe it is imperative that we preserve that opportunity for future generations.

I do not wish to live in a militarized state where naval operations take over our natural habitats, disturbing humans and native wildlife alike. Please consider the long-term effects of a decision of this magnitude and think about the kind of future future generations and our planet deserve.\textsuperscript{539}

In this Covid pandemic era, I’m appalled to learn of this massive encroachment of public parks as requested by the U.S. Navy. Our military services claim to already have the best, most highly trained fighting personnel in the world. No doubt if this claim is true, it is because they already have sufficient training facilities. Said intent does not contribute to my understanding of, and feelings regarding the U.S.Constitution wherein “...and provide for the common Defense & general Welfare of the United States”. So I’d say the Navy’s intent is an unnecessary expansion into the public sphere.

Even our past U.S. President Eisenhower, likewise was concerned about continual American domestic spending in pursuit of an ever expanding military industrial complex at the expense of the general welfare of citizenry. We need our parks to remain public and NOT militarized.

I additionally object to this proposal, as it’s in keeping with the governmental concept of spending all of your yearly budget, such that an increase is warranted for the next year. Is this an indication of that mindset? Our Federal administration & Congress recently passed over $700 billion toward the
2021 Pentagon budget, so now the Navy needs to train in State & Federal parks? Oh please, this is absurd. Give us a break!
I can forgive the Naval request because to a hammer, everything looks like a nail. Thus my fear is this proposal drives the nail further thru the heart of (both sides of the same coin), our democratic republic. Just say no.

In regards to state parks being used for Military Training. Fears of damage to our parks are unfounded and can be contractually certified and indemnified. Our Military devote the most productive years of their life in the most dangerous life threatening situations that exist, for the benefit of all Americans, even the ones that are too stupid to realize or understand that. Give them the opportunity to train where they see best and the best chance of surviving and coming home to contribute to America the rest of their lives also. Those complaining wouldn’t risk their cats pedicure appointment to save a real Americans life.

I fully support the expanded use of Washington State Parks for Naval Special Warfare training. This training will help save the lives of these brave Americans and is vital to our national security. The waters of Puget Sound and the diverse terrain of our state parks provide unique environments that cannot be replicated anywhere else in the United States. I believe that this training will be conducted safely with no adverse impact on the environment or the public. I ask that the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission support this request.
Remember, the Navy are the good guys! We should support them!

I’m writing today regarding the US Navy’s proposed Naval Special Operations Training in Western Washington State. As a retired Navy veteran, I generally support the Navy’s need to conduct training exercises. I am also aware of the fact that the Department of Defense owns thousands of acres of land and many miles of shoreline within Washington State that it can and does conduct special operations exercises on. Why does the Navy feel the need to now utilize Washington State Parks for training exercises? Myself along with millions of Washingtonians regularly visit our state parks for recreation, respite, peace and quiet, solitude, observing nature in an often-pristine setting. We also hold in high regard the critical habitat that state parks provide to all manner of animal and plant species, some of which are endangered or critically threatened. I do not wish to see the natural geological or biological features of our parks be trampled, disturbed or otherwise be subjected to further human impacts the Navy would impose. I do not wish to have my access to state parks and the utilization of said parks hampered or otherwise restricted in use by the Navy’s special operations training exercises. Further I do want to unwittingly become a part of the Navy’s training exercises. It is possible that unsuspecting citizens would encounter Navy SEALs carrying guns or even dummy guns, and because we live in a highly weaponized society, the potential for a catastrophic accident is significantly high.
Washington State Parks have been set aside for the specific purpose of enjoyment by the citizens of this state and that purpose is paramount to any and all other uses both real and proposed. State park lands are not federally owned lands and therefore do not fall within their right of use. Please do not allow this invasive, dangerous and irresponsible plan to move forward.

Please support our Navy personnel.
While on active duty, I knew just over 20 people who died in uniform. Like the special forces who wish to train, they were all real people.
The enclosed photo is me speaking to a group of activists (Portland, OR). I have significant experience in this respect, both in and out of uniform. -- YOU are experiencing organized opposition by similar activists.
Use of WA parks is merely a periphery to the activists’ objections. Over the years, almost without exception, their primary arguments are that, ‘America is what is wrong with the world’ and that, ‘the U.S. public is not safe from our own military.’
The individuals who will train in our parks are not abstracts. They are actual people who will face genuine risks ... and are someone’s son, husband, wife, daughter and friend. I ask you to allow Navy personnel to train in our parks and reject the notions that somehow their presence will pose any risk. In these uncertain times, our public could not be safer than with special forces in the near vicinity.544

As a Washingtonian of 76 years whose most treasured memories are attached to my years of camping, hiking and just plain inhaling the serenity and beauty of our treasured parks, it grieves me greatly that there is a move to despoil so many of these areas. Is it really true that there are plans to allow military practice at these following parks?: Blake Island, Cama Beach, Camano Island, Cape Disappointment, Deception Pass, Dosewallips, Fort Casey, Fort Columbia, Fort Ebey, Fort Flagler, Fort Townsend, Fort Worden, Grayland Beach, Hope Island, Illahee, Joseph Whidbey, Leadbetter Point, Manchester, Mystery Bay, Pacific Pines, Scenic Beach, Sequim Bay, Shine Tidelands, Skagit Island Marine, South Whidbey, Triton Cove, Twin Harbors, and Westport Light. It stretches the limit of credibility to think that deployment of military exercises is “nonsignificant”. Just think of the noise pollution as well as the environmental pollution that will result. The aftereffects of our past military adventures will continue for thousands of years. No one considered the long term effects of Hanford, yet look where we are today. Please, oh please, reconsider.545

I am writing on behalf of the Board and members of the Olympic Forest Coalition to comment on the Navy Special Operations Training in Western Washington application for permission to use 28 State Parks for cold water insertion training and other activities. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important permit application. Our organization urges the Commission to reject the Navy’s permit application, and to withdraw permission allowing current use of state Parks for Navy training, for the reasons described below.

The need for adequate training of our military personnel is a national security matter, and our organization recognizes and appreciates the service and sacrifice of generations of men and women in uniform. Adequate training to ensure our service members are prepared to meet every challenge is critical to national security and their safety. However, it is the duty of citizens in democratic society to point out where military activities unnecessarily contradict environmental laws, may risk public health and safety, restrict public enjoyment of publicly funded State parks, and contradict the purpose of public recreational facilities.

1. Reasonable and readily available alternatives. The Navy has sufficient lands to conduct the training they propose for state parks. The Navy owns 46 miles of shoreline and 151,975 acres of land in this region yet proposes to conduct “realistic” combat training along 265 miles of western Puget Sound shoreline that includes the proposed 28 state parks. “Realistic” means training among civilians in state parks, whether or not permission from those individuals has been granted. In materials provided to the Commissioners, the Navy states that there are no alternatives to using state parks and that it “will not be conducting surveillance of any members of the public, either through trainees or unmanned aircraft.” It does not address the fact that surveillance can easily be conducted with handheld or remotely planted devices. While the Navy states that it will instead employ its own designated “actors” upon whom such surveillance will be performed, handheld surveillance technology such as that in use by many police departments casts a wide electronic net with the potential for gathering the cellphone data of everyone in the area. Even “eyeballs” on the actors requires surveilling others in order to locate him/her. Actors embedded among civilian families who are camping or picnicking are likely to create this unavoidable scenario, leading to potential Fourth Amendment violations against those families who happen to be near the actor, not
to mention trauma if Navy participants are not.

Paragraph 3.

outed by a curious child or dog. If being among civilians was not necessary, this training could easily be conducted on the thousands of less-used and more remote public lands adjacent to the sea that are already utilized or owned by the Department of Defense. Thus, the necessity of using state parks only makes sense if detection of these “actors” among crowds of civilians is the objective.

Military doctrine advises units to “train as they intend to fight,” which, when spelled out in the same report, means, “(t)he training environment, together with the application of tactics, should produce the psychological conditions encountered on the battlefield and in support areas.”

The RPA states the trainings will occur between January and May, and June and November during the year, mostly during daylight hours. This training can last from 2 to 72 hours, and most of the selected sites are, according to Navy documents, slated for between six and eighteen training visits per year.

The Navy seeks permission to use the entire park. Trainees would come ashore in mini-subs, cross the beach, climb the bluff, and conceal in the landscape while observing the public for up to 72 hours before reversing and leaving the site. According to Navy documents, Navy observers would be stationed at the site of the activity and would engage with any civilians who find themselves close to the activity. In this violent climate with a pandemic raging, and even in normal times, the concept of civilians encountering armed members of the military in the psychological conditions expected on a battlefield while they are trying to enjoy a camping or picnicking experience is an unacceptable use of public parks. Families should not have to worry whether there is an armed person in camouflage hiding in the bushes watching them, and whether that person is a military trainee or a person intent on harm; the difference hardly matters, because for a child, trauma cannot be so easily parsed.

The military, including the Navy, currently trains on as much as 188 million acres of National Forest lands throughout the country, and has utilized other public and private lands. We object to the Navy’s proposal for military training in any state park, and we urge the Commission to reject the permit application and withdraw permission granted by staff to the Navy.

2. Full scope of training not portrayed in application materials: We are concerned about the lack of detail provided on maps in the presentation by Steve Brand and Jessica Logan to the Commissioners. For example, the following two maps depicting training that would take place at Blake Island State Park contain markedly different levels of detail:

Figure 1: Presentation to Commissioners showing bald eagle nest, custom exclusions, and park boundary.

Figure 2: Same site, Navy internal documents. Source: Navy slide show provided by a whistleblower and published by Truthout. Use of Blake Island’s marina by combat swimmers is not shown in previous presentation to Commission, but is on this map in green.

Blake Island is one of several sites that were previously being used for training, before Commissioners and the public were made aware of the training activities. Inconsistency among the Navy’s documents is not new. Navy maps in Environmental Assessments on at least two occasions since 2014 have erased major features such as rivers, mountains, and large lakes, making it difficult for the public to accurately locate Navy projects in order to assess and comment on potential impacts. Erasure of such detail violates legal requirements to provide as much accurate and complete information as possible for informed public decisions.

Figure 3: Direct Action operations area in magenta square.

Figure 4: Direct Action operations area in magenta square that includes public trails and a seating area set aside for quiet contemplation, called “Memory’s Vault.”

3. Training activities incompatible with public recreation: Despite not being mentioned in Training Activity Summaries presented to the Commissioners, “Direct Actions” are included in original Navy materials that list Fort Flagler and Fort Worden among six sites total that are slated for Direct Actions. Direct Action is described as: “Direct Action (DA): This training would consist of up to 20 personnel conducting “simulated” actions against a threat or enemy within the confines of a specified area or building. It would include the use of “simulated weapons”; no live-fire weapons would be used. The simulated weapons would be marking rounds, which are plastic/paint capsules that wash away with water. No property damage would occur, and cleanup would be handled by the instructors and support staff.”

To our knowledge none of the Navy’s training program materials have excluded these activities except for the application currently under consideration. Commissioners and the public deserve to know if the Navy is conducting or intends to conduct mock gun battles or other potentially frightening activities in state parks whether or not the public is present. These training site locations and activities, projected frequencies, and essential designations are clearly delineated in the Navy’s materials. The Commission should not proceed with review of any permit request by the Navy as the RPA materials are incomplete; the Navy must address the reasons for these and other inconsistencies.

According to previous Navy documents, trainees are expected to use aerial and surface drones
carrying “payloads” of technical equipment with data-capture and recording capability. In the current application before the Commission, they are not mentioned, and the Navy states they will not be used. However, we are concerned that should these activities be added later or used without notice to the Commission and the public, or without permission, there may be a possibility that surveillance could include warrantless downloading the contents of the cellphones of a civilian. This practice raises Fourth Amendment concerns about electronic surveillance of park users who are not the subject of a warrant or not suspected of terrorism.

The Navy has not addressed these concerns despite repeated disclosure in other permitting and environmental processes related to Navy training in our area. The State Parks Commission should request specific information from the Navy about electronic surveillance, explicitly rejecting the training at any and all state parks, along with any electronic surveillance of park users.

4. Potential increase in planned training activities not addressed: We note that “direct action” gun battles and building-clearing activities using “simulated” weapons, along with the use of unmanned aircraft (drones) for surveillance have not been included in the Navy’s application yet are central to this training as proposed in earlier Navy documents. Evidence for this is in the Navy’s nonpublic materials reported by the media (See: https://truthout.org/articles/exclusive-navy-uses-us-citizens-as-pawns-in-domestic-war-games/). While the Navy in its response to the Commission commits to not surveilling the public, we are concerned about potential “mission creep” that could add these activities back in to trainings in state parks or take place without monitoring and permission.

- What are the Park’s Commission procedures for handling future amendments to the Navy’s application that might seek to include these activities?
- Would the Commission be notified of expansions in the scope and nature of this training?
- Or would amendments be a matter again handled at the Park staff level, as were the permits for previous training?
- Will the Commission commit staff to monitor the Navy trainings to ensure they comply with limits?

The Navy has a consistent pattern of incremental increases in activity after modest starts. Unclear procedures for oversight of Navy activities, limited park staffing resources to oversee and manage the training, and the potential for unpermitted “mission creep” is a legitimate concern. An example on point is the fact that the Navy was granted a permit to use 5 parks for training from 2015 to April 30, 2020. It is reported that the Navy actually used 7 parks. The Navy committed to notify local law enforcement of its training activities; it has been reported that the Navy has not notified local law enforcement to date. The Commission should deny the permit for any training in state parks.

5. Segmented analysis violative of NEPA: The Navy has segmented its RPA and NEPA and potentially SEPA analysis to obfuscate the cumulative impacts of its training program. Specifically, the Navy’s 2018 environmental assessment for the complete training program said that 84 personnel would train annually in this State Parks program, but later at an open house to educate the public on this
training, Navy officials said that it would be 504. An email from the Governor’s Office responding to an open records request indicates that the program may include the possibility of up to 2,000 personnel. The information given to the public conflicts with the information given to the Commission. Therefore, the Commission should not grant this permit.

6. Environmental impacts not adequately assessed nor mitigated: The Navy determined that there will be no adverse environmental impacts, yet asks State Parks to identify any areas, habitats, or species they should avoid. The Navy assessment was not specific enough nor based on actual information to make a real determination on whether the habitats, species, or areas they will potentially use have or have not been identified. Since at least 2007, the Navy in the Pacific Northwest has not once concluded in any NEPA document that there would be significant impacts, when in fact there have been, both individually and cumulatively. Therefore, public trust in the Navy’s assurance in this case that there will be no significant impacts is also extremely low.

7. Inadequate oversight environmental agency consultation: In 2015 the media outlet Truthout published information about this training program based on a whistleblower source. These materials described this training in great detail. A Nov. 9, 2015 Navy telephone log stated, “Presently considering 68+- sites; on both military and non-military lands.” An in-house Draft Endangered Species Act Determination concluded there would be no effects on federally listed species or habitats, and, “(t)herefore, Navy consultation with the USFWS and NMFS under the ESA and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act is not required.” Self-certifying on endangered species issues to avoid consultation is unwise.

In addition, one of the two in-house slideshows depicted a number of selected sites intended for exemption to public disclosure requirements via the use of NEPA provisions for “categorical exclusions.” The Navy’s intent in late 2015 appeared to be to shield the magnitude of this training from the public and to conduct it without notification to relevant agencies. After the story broke in Truthout, the Navy admitted they’d been training in several state parks for years and initiated a public NEPA process on an “expanded” proposal. Their expanded proposal precisely matched the original, nonpublic one disclosed by the media.

Based on the reporting, one of our OFCO Board members contacted the Fish and Wildlife Service out of concern that some Navy training dates overlapped with nesting season on beaches for some critically important species. The Fish and Wildlife Service responded that it had not been apprised by the Navy of this training, and subsequently asked the Navy for consultation. Out of concern that this training was already taking place or could occur without a public process or state and federal agency notification, our Board member passed the information to federal and state contacts, and in early January 2016, to media outlets. We question why the Navy’s 2018 NEPA process included the full scope of activities, yet the current RPA before the Commission does not. We remain concerned that the scope of planned activities will later be expanded to conform with the Navy’s original plans.

In 2017 our Board member asked a Navy representative in charge of their regional environmental compliance programs whether any of the dozens of Environmental Impact Statements or Environmental Assessments produced by the Navy throughout the prior decade had concluded anything other than “No
Combined Navy Comments - post 12-18-20

**Significant Impacts.** He replied none had.

8. Public safety concerns not adequately addressed: Item E-1 on the Washington State Parks and Recreation Committee’s November 19, 2020 agenda, called Naval Special Operations Training in Washington State Parks – Report, [https://parks.state.wa.us/DocumentCenter/View/16005/Item-E-1-Naval-Special-Operations-Training-in-Washington-State-Parks--Report](https://parks.state.wa.us/DocumentCenter/View/16005/Item-E-1-Naval-Special-Operations-Training-in-Washington-State-Parks--Report) framed the Navy’s site selection suitability in terms of factors that include training, safety, and logistics. The Navy’s site selection safety criteria did not include public safety. The term “safety,” is defined in the report as “...assesses whether a site would put trainees or support teams at risk.” Trainee safety is very important. However, there is no corresponding statement on whether the public would be put at risk and what steps to mitigate potential risk will be taken.

Tragic encounters between armed civilians and Navy training activities have occurred. The Navy dismisses this possibility with their justification to Commissioners of a lethal shooting in North Carolina, where a sheriff’s deputy shot two trainees who refused to “break character” and cooperate with him during Operation Robin Sage; one trainee was killed. A lawsuit in that case ended with the community paying $750,000 in damages. This would be an unbearable burden to local government and communities, and our state government. The Commission must reject this permit application on the grounds that public safety is not adequately assessed and mitigated.

9. Liability not adequately assessed: The Navy will not be liable for injuries to civilians. The Navy Admiral informed the Commission that civilians would have recourse to “the Federal Tort Claims Act.” The Commission should request the Attorney General to assess potential liability for Washington state and should not consider this permit without a full legal assessment of liability risk for the state and local governments where the parks are located.

10. Archeological/historic consultations: At-risk archaeological sites must be identified in order to be avoided and protected. Tribes are often reluctant to identify their most sacred sites because of public exposure risks associated with them being recorded in government databases that are subject to FOIA requests. This was the case in 2018 and during previous NEPA processes where some Tribes refused to disclose their most sacred sites. Thus, National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) consultations for the RPA are likely incomplete. If confidential consultations with Tribes on sacred sites have not been adequately conducted and Tribal concerns resolved to the satisfaction of the Tribes that sites will not be impacted, the Commission must deny the permit.

11. Foreign military training: None of the materials appear to address whether foreign troops will be included in this training. Foreign military members are a significant presence at many bases including Whidbey Island, and are known to train in various capacities with American troops. We are concerned that the training could include foreign troops.

12. Incompatible use will erode public use of parks: Allowing military training is never appropriate among families who use public, state parks for camping and picnicking. It is problematic for park users throughout western Washington to know that at any time, for up to 72 hours, perhaps a dozen or more times per year, combat swimmers carrying rubber replica weapons...
could be swimming through public recreation areas, including marinas where families spend the night aboard their boats, or when they might be enjoying a night under the stars and in tents. It should be noted that in addition to Blake Island’s small marina, Navy materials show combat swimmers, surveillance, and other military maneuvers in several public marinas in western Puget Sound, including where people live aboard their boats. It is neither necessary nor appropriate for members of the military to be hiding in the woods surveilling passersby on a park’s public paths, or that “night vision devices” would be used to surveil them after dark, as stated in the presentation materials.

We believe that allowing the Navy to utilize Washington state parks for combat training would chill park use precisely at a moment when families most need safe outdoor recreational experiences; it could erode public support for funding state parks; and it will send an inappropriate signal that normalizes armed military presence in our most popular and accessible public recreational sites. Further, it would contribute to normalizing the covert physical and/or electronic surveillance of citizens by the military, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1385, and could trigger potential Fourth Amendment litigation.

The Navy dismissed any chilling effects on enjoyment of our state park system, of environmental impacts, of risks to public safety. Federal and state laws as well as zoning restrictions that conflict with using state parks and private lands for military training were also not addressed in the RPA.

We urge the Commission to preserve balanced public use, enjoyment and support of our state park system, and reject completely this incomplete, inadequate, unnecessary and unwise proposal, and to withdraw any permission for current training activities.

Thank you for your kind attention.

The US Navy has applied for a Right of Entry (ROE) permit(s) in order to conduct military training at 29 Washington State parks.

The proposal would allow Navy SEAL training at state parks that will include sea to land disembarkation, crossing over beaches, scaling bluffs and simulating warfare through park lands. Use of the park lands could be 24/7.

In addition to several trainees at each park, numerous trainers and equipment will be part of the exercises.

Regardless of the mitigations the Parks Department drafted, which are beside the point and, further, the adherence to which could not be overseen by Parks’ staff, we oppose ROEs for any of our State Parks.

Washington State Parks’ mission is to care for and connect park users with this state’s most treasured lands, waters and historic places, providing safe, enjoyable and memorable experiences. The public does not visit parks to meet up with, be confronted by, or be directed to move from areas by other users. The parks are publicly owned and funded. Allowance of military activities could drive the
public from the parks and, consequently, cost tourism and financial support depended upon by Washington State Parks and the communities where these parks are located.

The Navy is already damaging people’s enjoyment at Washington State Parks with Growler exercises. Your service is a recipient of these complaints.

We, the undersigned, oppose Parks contracting, in any form, with this or any other branch of the military for training purposes and encourage you to encourage the Navy to conduct its exercises at their multiple bases across the US.

Save the Olympic Peninsula (hereinafter STOP) offers the following two comments for your consideration:
1. RCW 79A.05.305, which provides as follows, prohibits you from approving the Navy's proposal:
   Declaration of policy—Lands for public park purposes.
The legislature declares that it is the continuing policy of the state of Washington to set aside and manage certain lands within the state for public park purposes. To comply with public park purposes, these lands shall be acquired and managed to:
   (1) Maintain and enhance ecological, aesthetic, and recreational purposes;
   (2) Preserve and maintain mature and old-growth forests containing trees of over ninety years and other unusual ecosystems as natural forests or natural areas, which may also be used for interpretive purposes;
   (3) Protect cultural and historical resources, locations, and artifacts, which may also be used for interpretive purposes;
   (4) Provide a variety of recreational opportunities to the public, including but not limited to use of developed recreation areas, trails, and natural areas.
   (5) Preserve and maintain habitat which will protect and promote endangered, threatened, and sensitive plants, endangered, threatened, and sensitive animal species, and habitat beneficial for the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of all pollinators, including honey bees; and
   (6) Encourage public participation in the formulation and implementation of park policies and programs.
   Permitting military combat exercises is not "managing" park property to "enhance ecological, aesthetic, and recreational purposes" as required by sub-section (1) of RCW 79A.05.305, nor does it meet or further the requirements of the remaining five sub-sections of that statute.
2. The proposal would further erode our national security by contributing to the concept that military aggression is proper throughout our society and in the most hallowed locations - which concept was tragically on display on January 6, 2021, at the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C. Now is the time to start limiting that concept by telling the United States Navy that Washington State Parks are no place for its war games.
   The assertion at https://parks.state.wa.us/1168/Navy-training-proposal that State Parks has the authority to permit this use is totally without merit. One of the two statutory provisions referenced there, RCW 79A.05.030(1), says nothing in that regard. The other statutory provision referenced there, RCW 79A.05.070, actually reinforces STOP’s position that RCW 79A.05.305 prohibits you from approving the Navy's proposal because an action of the Commission, not surprisingly, is required by RCW 79A.05.070(4) to "carry out the objectives and responsibilities of this chapter." The overriding "objectives and responsibilities of this chapter" are enumerated in RCW 79A.05.305. Nothing in the Navy's proposal carries out those objectives and responsibilities, chief among them being the obligation and responsibility for all of your actions to "maintain and enhance ecological, aesthetic, and recreational purposes."
STOP is a non-profit, public benefit corporation registered in Washington State since June 16, 2015. The undersigned [REDACTED] is the Chair of STOP, and he has been designated as its Naval Activities lead.

STOP’s purposes include ensuring “the best use of the land, the lakes, and the rivers on, and the skies above, the earth below, and the waters adjoining, the Olympic Peninsula of the State of Washington, in order to retain the unique character of the area, protect its environmental qualities, and provide for its enjoyment by generations to come.” Through these comments we hope to educate our governmental officials as to why these Naval activities are not consistent with those purposes. All the members of STOP’s Board of Directors live, work, recreate, hike, fish, or travel in areas of Washington State that will be adversely affected by the proposed Naval activities.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the SEPA threshold determination for The United States Naval Special Warfare Command (NSWC) proposal for special operations training in 28 Western Washington state parks. Audubon Washington works with 25 local chapters to deliver on-the-ground conservation across the state. In addition, our 49,000 members spread across every legislative district help advance balanced, effective conservation policies. We partner with policy makers, government agencies, tribes, and other conservation groups to drive forward-thinking conservation solutions that benefit birds and communities.

Washington’s state parks are treasured places that provide world-class recreational opportunities, support rich biodiversity, and are places of respite and renewal. Indeed, the mission of Washington State Parks to “…connect all Washingtonians to their diverse natural and cultural heritage and provide memorable recreational and educational experiences that enhance their lives” speaks to the powerful role that parks play in our lives. While we disagree that the NSWC’s proposed activities are compatible with the mission, vision and core values of Washington state parks, our comments today are focused on the coastal bird life of Washington state, and specific recommendations to minimize and avoid impacts to these birds and their food and habitat resources.

**Birds at Risk**

Puget Sound and the outer coastal beaches and estuaries of Washington State are areas of critical importance for birds within the Pacific Flyway (Figure 1). Seabirds, shorebirds, waterfowl, and other marine species rely on the rich food resources that thrive in our marine environment, particularly during the overwintering and migratory stop-over periods. Along Washington’s outer coast and Strait of Juan de Fuca (i.e., Region 3), productive waters and remote rocky islands support large colonies of breeding seabirds such as Rhinoceros Auklets, state endangered Tufted Puffins, and large concentrations of migrating Sooty Shearwaters and other pelagic species. Coastal estuaries and beaches in and around Grays Harbor and Willapa Bay are renowned for the spectacular concentrations of shorebirds that visit during spring migration. Aside from the significant numbers of Dunlin and Western Sandpipers that rest and winter in the area, these estuaries serve as the primary stopover habitat for migrating populations of the Pacific Red Knot on their journey from Mexico to Alaska and beyond (Buchanan et al. 2011). The state and federally-listed Western Snowy Plover breeds at just three locales in and around Willapa Bay, including two state parks (Stinson 2016). Marbled Murrelet, also a state and federally-listed species, forages in nearshore marine waters throughout Washington State (Desimone 2016).

Puget Sound (i.e., Region 1 and 2) supports a critical link in the annual life cycle of many marine and coastal bird species, supporting over 70 species of shorebirds, waterfowl, secretive marsh birds, and other marine bird species (Buchanan 2006). Waterfowl species diversity is exceptionally high during winter months, when 38 species of waterfowl congregate in the area (Gaydos and Pearson 2011). Numerous community science projects monitor marine birds in Puget Sound (e.g., Seattle Audubon...
Puget Sound Seabird Survey, Pigeon Guillemot Network), reflecting the public’s connection to and stewardship of birds.

Community Values at Risk

Birds provide ecological, cultural, and economic benefits to Washington residents and communities. Access to birds – whether for observation, hunting, photography, or simple enjoyment, brings economic and cultural benefits to coastal communities. Many Northwest Tribes rely on these birds for ceremonial and subsistence living purposes, and birds provide a connection to their traditional ecological knowledge systems and cultures. Numerous festivals occur throughout the region in celebration of birds, bringing additional tourist dollars and opportunities for new audiences to connect with nature. Birds also provide ecosystem services to river delta estuaries via dispersal of seeds and invertebrates, and as herbivores and predators (Green and Elmberg 2014).

Biological Resource Protection Recommendations

The proposed activities have the potential to disturb birds during sensitive times in their annual cycle (e.g., spring and fall migration), disturb or degrade nesting, foraging and roosting habitat, disturb or degrade food sources (e.g., forage fish spawning habitat), and may serve as a conduit for the transfer of invasive aquatic and marine riparian species. We appreciate that activity-specific protection measures for sensitive species and habitats have been developed, and agree that local natural resource managers should be consulted on avoidance measures for sensitive resource areas, timing issues and compliance with local management objectives.

However, despite increased public demand for and use of our state parks, administration and stewardship support for our state parks is notoriously underfunded. We are very concerned about the ability of managers to absorb and fully execute the responsibility of stewarding natural resource and cultural values under this plan. A strong mitigation and avoidance plan will not suffice if there is no institutional capacity to implement it. Should the proposal proceed, the applicants should establish a funding mechanism to support the associated management burden that will fall on Washington State Parks.

According to the Washington State Parks Mitigated Determination of Non-significance, State Parks will condition any future permits with the following mitigation measures listed below to avoid, minimize, or mitigate for any potential significant adverse impacts to Plants, Animals, Cultural and Historic Resources, Recreation. Recommended changes to this language for plants and animals are indicated in italics.

B.4. Plants

- The Navy will follow all conditions and Best Management Practices (BMPs) described in the “2019 Final Environmental Assessment for Naval Special Operations Training in Western Washington” to avoid, minimize or otherwise mitigate impacts to plants.
- During training activities, Navy staff will monitor for the presence of listed state and federal species and trainees will stay on developed trails only in areas where sensitive species are present.
- Trainees will avoid steep slopes and feeder bluffs.
- Trainees will avoid active restoration sites or any restored areas off limits to the public.
- All Natural Area Preserves (a Washington State Parks Classification and Land Management Plan classification) will be excluded from use areas.
- The Navy shall conduct before and after monitoring, assessment and reporting on the condition of submerged aquatic vegetation and riparian vegetation and invasive species at sites where training activity exceeds 3 visits/year.

B.5. Animals
During training activities, Navy staff will monitor for the presence of listed state and federal species and will not harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct. The Navy shall conduct monitoring at training sites to track potential impacts to listed species for a biologically appropriate timeframe post-training activity.

The Navy will avoid conducting shall not conduct trainings during nesting windows for listed species in parks where those species exists.

The Navy will avoid areas within 300 feet of nest sites for identified raptor species during breeding seasons.

No boats will be landed within shores designated within the Natural Areas classification.

The Navy shall conduct before and after monitoring, assessment and reporting on the occurrence and local abundance of species of conservation concern at sites where training activity exceeds 3 visits/year.

The Navy and State Parks have identified a number of important measures that will help minimize and avoid impacts to sensitive natural resources, including birds. For these measures to be successful, we recommend two overarching actions:

A funding mechanism to support Washington State Parks Natural Resource Department’s role in overseeing site-based resource protection.

Development and implementation of a comprehensive biological monitoring program at state parks for sensitive plant and animal species to track and mitigate for impacts resulting from naval training activities.

Please don’t hesitate to contact us if you have questions about the recommendations in this letter.
group of observers who will be patrolling in civilian clothes, and stopping members of the public who encroach unwittingly on the exercise. Clearly, members of the public will be under observation and their freedom of activity limited.

- State Parks’ Determination of Non-Significance is Contrary to Its Mission
  State Parks’ determination of non-significance is contrary to its mission to “care for the State’s most treasured lands, waters and historic places,” and would burden Park staff with more responsibilities at a time when the State is furloughing staff and cutting back hours, and resources to maintain our parks are inadequate. These exercises would inevitably lead to damage to foliage, trails, roads, and wildlife habitat—especially if heavy equipment is used, which is an acknowledged possibility.

- Damage to Our Parks Will Be Impossible to Monitor and Taxpayers Will Foot the Bill
  The Navy claims that it will notify law enforcement and park management before any training exercise. A Public Records Request reveals that it has never done so during the five years it has held a permit and there is no reason to believe it will do so now. This leaves State Parks’ staff unable to monitor such exercises and makes it more difficult to evaluate environmental impacts after the fact.

  The Navy has further claimed that it will accept no liability and has no obligation to reimburse the State for any damages. The Admiral in charge has stated that “there’s always the Federal Tort Claims Act” by way of redress. This places an intolerable burden on our Parks and the taxpayers of Washington State. There is also the legal question of whether or not State Parks has the right to enter into an agreement where liability isn’t clearly defined or acknowledged. 180 Nickerson Street | Suite 202 | Seattle WA 98109 | 202-378-0114

  While both State Parks and the Navy claim that they will “pay all applicable fees,” research demonstrates that the Navy is in fact exempt from those fees, so “all applicable fees” are likely to amount to precisely $0.00.

- The Navy’s Final Environmental Assessment Was Inadequate and Does Not Support State Park’s Determination of Non-Significance
  The Navy’s Final Environmental Assessment (EA) is inadequate in its evaluation of potential damage to threatened or endangered sea life. The EA acknowledges that explosive devices may be set off in the water, with no investigation into the actual effects this could have on fish, amphibians, and marine mammals, other than a conclusion that there would not likely be damage. The effect of sonar and related technologies on sea life is also controversial and is the subject of continuing scientific investigation and concern. The Navy’s inadequate investigation of these effects on sea life is especially troubling considering the decline of the region’s Orca and Salmon populations and the growing consensus that climate change will only accelerate these trends.

- State Parks Has Failed to Consider The Impact on Public Health in Light of COVID-19
  The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that our State Parks are more important than ever to help people cope with the stress of the pandemic and its accompanying economic distress. Conducting military exercises in our parks at
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| this time and limiting park access at a time when such access is most needed, represents the height of insensitivity to the health and well-being of Washington State residents. For all these reasons, then, the Sierra Club opposes granting of a "Right of Entry" Permit to the US Navy for the proposed training exercises, and suggests to the Navy that it find appropriate locations along its existing 46 miles of Washington shoreline in which to conduct its training. 180 Nickerson Street | Suite 202 | Seattle WA 98109 | 202-378-0114 4 We appreciate this opportunity to comment and look forward to your reconsideration of this ill-advised proposal by the Navy. | 100 |

I am writing to you on behalf of Evergreen Islands regarding the Navy's proposal to conduct special operations training in 28 State Parks. Evergreen Islands is a 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to promote, protect, and defend the unique ecosystem involving the saltwater islands of Skagit County and their environs as it relates to the built and natural environments. Evergreen Islands has been active for over 40 years. The Mission of the Washington State Parks Commission is to care for "Washington's most treasured lands, waters, and historic places. State parks connect all Washingtonians to their diverse natural and cultural heritage and provide memorable recreational and educational experiences that enhance their lives." Also, the Vision is for the parks to "be cherished destinations with natural, cultural, recreational, artistic, and interpretive experiences that all Washingtonians enjoy, appreciate, and proudly support." Evergreen Islands opposes Navy SEAL training in Washington State Parks because the use is not in alignment with the mission and vision of the Commission. In particular, Deception Pass State Parks should be immediately excluded from further consideration for Navy training. We have the following issues and concerns regarding the proposal before the Commission: Navy Special Operations training poses a direct conflict with the mission of state parks and the recreational experiences visitors seek in these natural and historic outdoor settings. While the Navy downplayed the probability of direct contact between Navy SEALs and park visitors, the indirect impacts of park visitors and area residents knowing that this training may occur has best been described as "creepy". The knowledge that this training may occur in Washington State Parks detracts from the value of State Parks, may keep people from visiting and certainly detracts from the park experience. In my 35 plus years working on special use permits for the US Forest Service and several years in County Parks, permit applications were screened and one of the questions the agency routinely asks is whether the use can be accommodated on lands other than forest/parks. In this case, 1 Washington State Parks Mission & Vision https://parks.state.wa.us/176 / Mission-vision 2 surely the military can practice on the existing military bases around Puget Sound. If not within the Puget Sound, what about less populated and more challenging coastal conditions in Southeast Alaska? Extending military training into Washington State Parks is the equivalent of expanding military bases beyond their current footprint. Tourism may suffer. Many communities around Puget Sound and the Salish Sea depend on tourism. Allowing the area to become a giant military staging ground with growler jets and now SEAL training will further cripple the tourism industry and threaten small businesses: inns, B&Bs, restaurants, farms, wineries/distilleries, retailers, and outdoor recreation (whale watching, diving, kayaking, fishing, paddle boarding, boating). Outdoor recreation is important to our quality of life in Western Washington. Outdoor recreation in Washington is valued at $21.6 billion and helps to create 199,000 jobs. This is more than the $15...
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| billion contributed to our economy by military and defense industries. In Skagit County alone, Washington State Parks contribute $7.5 million annually to our economy. State Parks in Skagit County generate 86 jobs directly related to expenditures in support of recreation at these parks. These parks have provided a much needed respite during the pandemic. Deception Pass State Park already has far too much existing use, including overnight use, to be considered as a location for special operations training. The park is also heavily impacted by the Growler operations at Whidbey Island Naval Air Station. Deception Pass is Washington’s most-visited state park, offering camping, hiking, fishing, and bird-watching opportunities. How will visitors react to knowing there are secret military operations in the forest? As it is, campers have chosen to pull up stakes and fold up their tents, shortening their stay to escape the noise of growler jets. Adding Navy special operations training in addition to the expanding fleet of growlers based at Whidbey Island, the cumulative impacts of military operations far exceed any conscionable threshold. In conclusion, Evergreen Islands requests that the Commission disallow Navy special operations training in Washington State Parks and immediately exclude Deception Pass State Park from further consideration for military training. We appreciate this opportunity to share our perspective and the willingness of the Commission to seek this additional opportunity for public comment. |

| Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the U.S. Naval Special Warfare Command’s proposal to conduct special operations training in sites in western Washington, including nearshore lands and inland waters of some state parks. Several of the 28 state parks identified in the proposed action contain rare plant and/or rare/high-quality ecological communities. With regard to the possible overlap of these rare elements with the proposed training sites, our botanist and vegetation ecologists have prepared the following comments and recommendations. A map that depicts the location of these rare plants and ecological communities (called element occurrences) in relation to Department of Defense and State Parks and Recreation lands is enclosed. Rare Plants Regarding rare plant elements, only 9 of the 29 state parks identified by the US Navy for use in training exercises contain known occurrences: Blake Island, Cape Disappointment, Deception Pass, Fort Casey, Fort Columbia, Leadbetter Point, Pacific Pines, Sequim Bay, and Westport Light State Parks. Castilleja levisecta (golden paintbrush) is the only listed Threatened or Endangered plant species found within these state parks. It is known from an historical and extirpated occurrence at Deception Pass SP and an extant occurrence at Fort Casey State Park. A large portion of the Fort Casey occurrence is fenced to keep rabbits and deer out. It would be desirable to keep the area from within the fence from being used in the training exercises to avoid disruption to ongoing monitoring research. Working with State Parks and Recreation, the Navy should identify specific areas where these element occurrences are present and try to avoid training activities in those areas to avoid impacts from trampling. The Navy might also consider the time of year when exercises are conducted and try to avoid periods of time (primarily in spring and early summer) when vascular plant elements are flowering or fruiting and most vulnerable to impacts. By contrast, late summer, fall and winter exercises when these species are dormant would minimize impacts. |

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Among the rare plant species present in the 9 state parks, a large number are restricted to grassy and rocky bald habitats or meadows on bluffs above the high tide line. These include Castilleja levisecta, Leptosiphon minimus, Meconella oregana, Nuttallanthus texanus, Plectritis brachystemon, and Sanicula arctopoides. These are probably the species most at risk from trampling during beach landings or later drills. Avoiding these habitats as much as possible would reduce potential impacts. Other rare plant species tend to occur in cliff sites (Baccharis pilularis ssp. consanguinea, Poa unilateralis ssp. pachypholis) or steep slopes with dense brush (Woodwardia fimbriata) where impacts are likely to be low. Several lichen species are found in the state parks but are mostly epiphytes on tree branches or found on rocky cliffs and are not likely to be affected by trampling.

With careful coordination between the Navy and State Parks and Recreation resource managers, it should be possible to minimize negative impacts from the training exercises.

Rare/High-quality Ecological Communities
The proposed training action may overlap with approximately 52 known plant community element occurrences (EOs) ranging from those ranked A, excellent estimated viability, to CD, fair or poor estimated viability. Due to the scope of this project, we are unable to provide specific recommendations for individual EOs, however, we can provide the following guidance for operations in and around these communities based on their general characteristics. These suggestions should apply to the plant communities that are identified as EOs, all of which have significant conservation value. We do not have recommendations for areas falling outside of our mapped EOs, but it is unlikely that these are the only areas that should be considered for avoidance before training actions occur. Collaboration with Parks staff will be the most effective way to prevent any potential impacts to sensitive areas.

The potentially impacted plant communities are diverse, but generally fall into three categories: Upland Forests, Grasslands, and Wetlands. We recommend the following measures in each of these categories below:

- **Upland Forests**: Upland forest plant communities generally have a canopy of trees of varying density and an understory of shrubs and herbaceous plants. These communities are resilient to light foot traffic as described in the proposed action and are unlikely to be harmed by overland travel. Heavy foot traffic and equipment staging should be avoided in these areas.

- **Grasslands**: Grasslands are communities of native herbaceous vegetation with little to no tree cover. The rare grassland ecosystems in these areas have many species that are damaged by trampling and impacted by invasive plants introduced by foot traffic. We would recommend avoiding these areas completely to prevent impacts.

- **Wetlands**: For the purposes of these recommendations, wetlands are plant communities that are water dependent and may have trees, shrubs, or herbaceous plants occurring within. Wetland plant communities are easily damaged due to their hydrology and unstable soils. Foot traffic may cause vegetation trampling, sedimentation, and introduce invasive species. These plant communities should be completely avoided during training operations. All wetland plant communities, including tidal marshes, fens, bogs, peatlands, swamps, etc. can be included in these recommendations. Training activities occurring in the identified sensitive areas may result in a decrease in the long term viability of these plant communities. Additional information or recommendations for specific EOs are available upon request.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to comment.

As you no doubt hear from a large number of such comments, the State Parks are the heritage of the citizens of Washington. It's what the NW culture is all about. Forests, mountains, streams, open areas and trails. We're hikers and climbers and swimmers and campers who love our native outdoors.
The used to all be free but some $20 years ago we were accessed a fee for access, now called a forest pass. We've come to accept this change and many of us acquiore a Parks Pass when re licensing our automobiles. Will we continue to pay this access fee when these heralded areas of sanctuary and peace and nature are getting shared with the US military? I for one will not. If the State Parks change the agreement (with the public) by allowing the military to use these areas for their training purposes - I'm out. I know this is a defeated reaction on my part but at some pint one must stand up for their principles and refuse to fund an asset which has been needlessly degraded for no visible purpose.

Please do not allow any military training to occur at any State Park. These parks are meant for public use not for any military agenda. People should feel safe to be in the parks without coming upon military drills. Please keep the military out of the parks!!

This is such a terrible idea on so many levels. Our parks are places of refuge & quiet, and that escape into nature is vital for citizens' well-being. The idea of the military doing training exercises in our parks is frightening, wrong, and will ruin the parks for the citizens the parks are meant to serve. Please do not permit this to happen

I am concerned that the Navy Proposal will impact the fragile ecological environments that our State Parks are trying to preserve from delicate tidal life to moss covered rocky balds to spring wild flower meadows and fern covered forest floors. I hike in Deception Pass State Park daily and see how just a few hikers can destroy and erode an area by walking off the path. I can't imagine a navy operation force storming across areas that have been protected from human impact for decades! Please don't allow this.

I am opposed to the use of our State Parks for military training purposes. My house abuts the Camano Island State Park. Just knowing there are men with guns close to my windows frightens me. This is especially true with all the political division and the recent Jan 6th Insurrection in Washington DC. One of our neighbors near the Park has a shooting range on their property and it scares me to hear their gunfire. One could not know the intentions of individuals hiding in the bushes in our beloved parks. As is, I have ordered window coverings to help reduce my anxiety which has increased in recent years.

I respectfully ask the State Parks Commission to reject the Navy's use permit. The Navy should use other non-park areas available to them for their training purposes. Using our State Parks for this purpose is inconsistent the mission and goals of the State Parks and the expectations of visitors who come to the parks with their families to unwind in nature and relax. We need to preserve the sanctuary of our natural places.

The Navy has so many of its own sites for training. Our public parks are just that - public. As such military training and use is totally inappropriate. Our public places are necessary for the health of all living creatures and using our parks for war games just adds unnecessary stress on these environments. Please do not approve this request by the Navy.

NO!!! Just no! Have a brother and a nephew who are Navy Seals and they both say no! The Navy and the military in General have more than enough federal land to launch as many war training exercises as they want. Using public parks for this is just outrageous! You are endangering innocent park users with war time games for no reason. Stop! Use your own land!

Well, I guess all I am allowed to say is, "simper simper, please goody sirs and madams, don't peer at me from the bushes, please". Ludicrous idea, what kinds of minds come up with this?

Allowing the Navy to conduct military training in our State Parks is not consistent with the Parks' mission and the public's use of the Park system. Please do NOT issue a permit to the Navy for the purpose of military training. Thank you.
Too long have people continued with projects not realizing the damage they do to habitat and wildlife. Noise and pollution from fuels damage our ecosystem. We are now seeing how much of a negative impact and the consequences of ignoring the health of our planet. We must protect our wild spaces. Park management should not be about using the resources but about protecting them. We NEED them, it isn’t a choice, it is a necessity. Do not give permits to the Navy to do maneuvers over our fragile parklands! Our parks are for our people. Unfortunately there isn’t any place that wouldn’t be impacted negatively, but do not allow this in our parks.562

I continue to vehemently oppose this request from the Navy. Washington state is not their personal backyard to do with as they please. The effects of many of their “trainings” have been shown to be harmful and toxic to the humans and wildlife that call Washington home. Our state has always been relatively quiet and peaceful (except for here on Whidbey Island where the Growlers continue to ruin the lives of the people who live near the outlying field). The majority of people would like the state to stay peaceful and quiet, so that we can continue to enjoy it without having our privacy and our senses invaded. If they must practice their war-related games, let them do it out in the middle of nowhere, where it won’t be an invasion of privacy, at least. Invasion of privacy and horrific sounds should not ruin the lives of living creatures on land or sea. The Navy is supposed to protect us, not terrorize us.563

I am a resident of Washington State and I am absolutely not okay with this proposed military use of Washington State parks. Not only does the very concept go this training go against the idea of recreational spaces for people, the potential for habitat destruction and pollution are huge and virtually inevitable. Our parks are protected lands for wildlife, and navy training on them would be detrimental to the ecosystem there.564

It is completely outside the mission of Parks to allow military personnel and operations secret access around recreating citizens. The Navy has a plethora of wild acreage for training and can use each other as simulators -- no need to make citizens props in training. Dangerous confrontations with surprised and armed citizens can occur as can invasions of privacy. And stealth work (including climbing steep slopes) can create damage and erosion. Simply a distortion of Parks mission. Please vote “No.”565

My house abuts the Camano Island State Park and I am opposed to the use of our State Parks for military training purposes. Our parks are a sanctuary for wildlife and recreation. Visitors come here to be in nature and not to be covertly surveilled by military trainees. I, myself, would find it very, very disturbing and traumatic to come across anyone in the park hiding with a weapon (real or not). This is especially true with all the political division and the recent Jan 6th insurrection in Washington DC. Already one of our neighbors near the Park has decided to turn their property into a shooting range. On weekends, their shots can be heard and it makes it sound like we live in a war zone. I worry about my safety and the safety of my wife. I respectfully ask the State Parks Commission to reject the Navy’s use permit. The Navy should use other non-park areas available to them for their training purposes. Using our State Parks for this purpose is inconsistent the mission and goals of the State Parks and the expectations of visitors.566

I am writing to urge you to deny the request to use state parks for military purposes. Parks belong to the taxpayers and I did not pay a fee to be spied on and threatened by troops in camouflage. Parks should be for relaxing and enjoying nature. I am appalled this is even under consideration.567

The US military is a giant polluter, it makes no sense to offer up our precious parks in order to support imperialist efforts that ultimately harm our planet. The US military has no place in public parks.568

I strongly OPPOSE Naval training in Washington State Parks.
I believe our parks must be dedicated to providing healthy outdoor recreation, education and social activities. Military training on these unique and special places is antithetical to their intended peaceful use. Just say "NO" to this proposal.569

The Navy’s proposed use of our state parks for covert mission training makes no sense. Surely with all of the properties owned by the military around Puget Sound there are other alternatives for war gaming. Our parks are for The People, and are becoming more popular due to the current pandemic. Our Parks are not for the military to use under any circumstances. We already have to put up with extreme noise pollution from NAS Whidbey that negatively affects some of our most popular parks; this is just a case of the Navy going too far. Enough is enough.570

Please DO NOT allow military training in Washington state parks. This will make people who like to use the parks nervous, and will disturb the peaceful nature that parks are supposed to represent. This is not supported by the citizens of Washington state.571

This is perversion of the highest order. I was stalked at a meeting put on by the navy, by a man in uniform who followed me around the hall as talked to different presenters. I asked the Coupeville Marshal to see my to my car, I was afraid he would follow me. I should have complained to a Navy official. Now these men and women are going to be creeping around in my backyard park, spying on me, and goodness what else. Perhaps I should be armed. This is a heinous abuse of the National Parks. If I went on base and climbed a fence and started creeping around the planes I would be arrested. These are our parks, they do not belong to the military. Cease and desist. Go find your own playgrounds. Creep up on each other. One group could be the "perps" the other the "good guys", you know the story line. Leave good people to enjoy nature without fear. [REDACTED]. Air force wife.572

What is a public park?
Areas of land open to the public and managed by federal, state, or municipal governments, or private organizations. Public parks can be of almost any size and configuration, but share a common purpose of specific and civic benefit for users from the general public.

Public Park | The Cultural Landscape Foundation
A park is for families, individuals, couples, to walk in; animals, birds, to be in naturally; flora to thrive—~not for militarization of any kind. You have a conscience. Be quietly with it for a while. It will lead you.573

I object to let the Navy/Military occupy our state parks as covert sites to train. We as Washingtonians have the greatest gifts that nature could ever give us: our parks. Personally, I feel very free and secure at our parks and so does my family, my friends, and I’m sure the rest of the community. Bringing military people to these peaceful parks will not only disrupt the peace, but put in fear those members of our community who this country has failed to protect. Being a woman of color, I know I wouldn’t feel as safe as I usually do at parks, since these people would be using very real-looking weapons to train. I wouldn’t want my little cousins or nieces to be afraid of going to the park because they know that some strange-looking people with weapons are around. A park is meant to roam free. It is a place where people go to have a nice walks and to clear their minds, not to hold profesional military trainings there. I am sure I am not the only person that objects this, and I am sure that if this is put through, our parks won’t be seen the same anymore.574

I absolutely oppose utilizing our state parks for federal or any military training. The state parks are for recreational use and enjoyment for the public, not for military training. We have military reservations in this country set aside for military training. Military training should be done on land set aside for the military’s use, not Washington state parks. Do not spoil our beautiful parks that are badly needed for the beauty, the peace, the tranquility that so many offer and for much needed recreational and spiritual purposes.
No Navy use in our State Parks. I am opposed to Navy training in state parks. The Navy owns thousands of acres of beachfront land in Washington that it could use for training. Hiding in the woods with simulated weapons spying on people innocently enjoying and camping in state parks is a recipe for disaster. Already in North Carolina a sheriff's deputy shot two navy personnel who accosted him with simulated weapons. One died and the other was seriously injured. Then the Navy sued the county for damages and was awarded $750,000.

As you no doubt know, many law-abiding citizens are armed these days and the possibility of a similar situation between an armed citizen and a Navy trainee is entirely likely. I understand that state parks do not allow firearms, but I also am aware that many families camping in the parks have firearms in their possession.

Further, who wants a person wearing camouflage and black face paint skulking around the camp during the middle of the night when you are in a tent or a sleeping bag. Please deny this request from the navy and let them use their own land for training.

Please, please do not approve navy or any military branch's use of our parks for military training. The military already has plenty of places to train (and some have been left polluted with chemicals and old weapons like Lake Hancock and farms near OLF on Whidbey Island). Please we do not need to encroach upon still more pristine areas for peaceful family recreation. Ridiculous that navy needs more area, and so easy to see some kind of fatal accident if citizen mistakes 'exercise' for a real invading army or criminal - there is absolutely NO need for park use. We paid taxes to assure our own shared recreational use, not military use.

Parks are for citizens to enjoy not for war games and military exploitation. It is sad enough that the MIC continues to take more and more of our tax dollars and goes to illegal wars for corporate profit, please do not allow them to also take our parks from us.

My comments are in regards to the Navy Training Proposal. As a resident who lives on Whidbey Island, I support the military, their families. I love the diversity and boon this brings to the local economy. However, I do NOT support any military exercises within public spaces. Whidbey Island already has land and water set aside for the Navy to use and train within. For example, Lake Hancock northwest of Greenbank, WA is off-limits to civilians because it is dedicated to training. Therefore, it is NOT necessary for the Navy to conduct exercises within Washington State or county parks.

Honestly, I feel military and law enforcement training should NEVER take place on publicly accessible lands. The training should not be in view of the public. Likewise, the public should not be barred from using lands set aside for preservation and recreation for all. Military and law enforcement activity, including training, encourages militia-minded fools to dress up and play mercenary too. Consider the January 6th attack on the US Capitol. This riot was a danger, a serious threat to elected leaders, civilians, the military, and law enforcement! Do NOT think for a moment that this cannot happen on Whidbey. The Seattle Times covered a few of the right-wing activities that happened before and after November’s presidential election: https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/far-right-group-stakes-claim-at-whidbey-island-grange-stoking-angry-debate-and-exposing-political-divides/. As a local resident, I find this racist activity unacceptable. Considering there are links between these extremists and both the military and law enforcement already, I am extremely wary of the proposed training in public parks.

The last thing we need right now is a bunch of camo wearing people hiding out and playing soldier in the woods or on the beaches. The Navy might be using simulated weapons, but the self-appointed militia members are armed. If peaceful demonstrators are added to the mix, then it is not going to end well.
In conclusion, I ask that the Washington State Parks deny the Navy’s request because a) there is already space set aside for their training, b) training on public lands will encourage more violent activity by socially disenfranchised people, and c) these lands are for the preservation and recreation of all, not the privileged few.

I am a resident of Whidbey Island and I strongly oppose the use of state parks for military training. Our state parks are a treasured resource for use by the residents of, and visitors to, our wonderful region for rest, relaxation, and socialization. They must remain as such and be able to be enjoyed without the thought of military trainees hiding behind corners and lurking in bushes. The intentions and protocols of the trainees and the training program are irrelevant. Their presence fundamentally changes the nature of the parks and cannot be tolerated. I find the fact that this proposal has made it this far in the process to approval to be deeply disturbing. How was it not laughed off the table in disgust when it was first suggested?

This training program must not be allowed to proceed. It is anathema to the most basic principles of our parks.

I am strongly AGAINST expansion of special training operations to Deception Pass State Park and other state parks.

I oppose using state parks for the purpose of Naval Training. I frequently walk in public parks or ride my bicycle. I do NOT like the idea that there could be “war games” happening when I’m using the parks. I also know that use of the parks is funded by the state through a variety of means. Should this increase the “wear and tear” on the parks, it is not fair that the Navy says it will not fund this. I also understand that liability is not being claimed. So if one of the Naval personnel makes an error and a private citizen is harmed by their actions, then what? I don’t like this at all. Tell them the State Parks belong to the people of Washington, not the Navy.

I OPPOSE allowing Navy training in Washington State Parks. The US military is one of the biggest polluters in the world and goes against everything state parks and nature preserves should stand for. Washington state parks are precious resources and I am staunchly opposed to Navy training happening within them.

Don’t disturb other ecosystems for military training. Believe it or not it helps weaken our national security.

It’s hard to believe I even have to take a stand against WAR GAMES IN MY STATE PARKS - one of the more offensive ideas in our lives right now. NO! This is not what parks are for.

This is a wildly radical militarization of our public spaces, and it sends a message of war and the normalcy of military force to our children. Please reconsider this course of action as it can be seen as no other way than as the shift from a nation of war to protect, and into the territory of war as a way of life.

I strongly object to the Navy using Parks for training. It is a proven danger to wildlife and diminishes our quality of life. After all we are talking about airplanes and they can fly to other places to train. The residents of Whidbey Island have long supported the Navy, but that does not include the right to endanger our wildlife and degrade our way of life with I strongly oppose the navy using our parks for training. It is a proven danger to wildlife and represents a total disregard for our quality of life. The residents of Whidbey Island and this region have long supported the Navy but the recent proposed increases in proposed flight activity have gone way too far. These are airplanes after all, they can fly to other areas to spread out the impact. Keep the Navy from damaging our parks and quality of life.
The Navy wants to increase its usage of WA State Parks 5-fold, and 20% of that increase is on the mere 40 miles of Whidbey Island itself?! After observing, for the last 2 years, the Navy demonstrating total disregard for the residents of Whidbey Island with its 4-fold increase of the deafening Growler intrusion into our lives, no thanks! Apparently, if the Navy is given an inch, it will eventually take a mile. They certainly have not earned our trust, and they do not deserve further compromise from the folks on the island.

I love my state parks. That being the main reason I've done volunteer work at CISP and Cama Beach SP over the past 17 years. Frequently, after finishing the job given to me by parks staff, I walk the beach or trails with litter bag, enjoying the serenity and peace and quiet. This would no longer be possible with the military infiltrating my parks, sneaking around. I totally and extremely object to being surveilled without my knowledge or permission. Just thinking about it gives me the creeps. Please deny the navy's requested right of entry permit, and leave my parks to unwind, rest, and enjoy nature.

The Navy's use of Washington State Parks does not align with the mission, vision and core values stated by the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission. Instead, the Navy's use of our state parks is an exploitation of our parks and makes them a fearful place to go. I cannot imagine thinking of the states parks as a cherished destination knowing that the military is lurking about in the bushes. I find that down right creepy, and it would make me not want to go to the parks where it might be occurring.

This potential decision seems to be thought of as an economic opportunity for the state park system, rather than adhering to why Washington has state parks and why Washington residents care about them so much.

Please do not allow the Navy to use our state parks to desecrate our cherished natural destinations.

MISSION & VISION

MISSION
The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission cares for Washington’s most treasured lands, waters, and historic places. State parks connect all Washingtonians to their diverse natural and cultural heritage and provide memorable recreational and educational experiences that enhance their lives.

VISION
Washington's state parks will be cherished destinations with natural, cultural, recreational, artistic, and interpretive experiences that all Washingtonians enjoy, appreciate, and proudly support.

CORE VALUES
The agency has adopted the following core values:

- Commitment to stewardship that transmits high quality park assets to future generations
- Dedication to outdoor recreation and public enjoyment that welcomes all our citizens to their public parks
- Excellence in all we do
- Involving the public in our policy development and decision making
- Support for one another as we translate our mission into reality
Which of these is objects does not belong?

Trees
Peaceful tranquility
Hikers and camping
Streams
Natural environment
Military operations

I won't plan my vacation on a military base if you don't practice military exercises in our parks.592

I am a regular user of Washington State Parks and I am completely shocked that this activity is even being considered. It is NOT in the mission of the state parks. There is NO way my dog would not perceive the presence of a supposedly innocuous, invisible camouflaged person. And here is a story from Bowman Bay State Park in August of 2019. I was camping with my grandchildren. It was the time of bioluminescence. We went down to the beach about 10 p.m. and were rewarded with a wonderful look at the bioluminescence. Our grandchildren are from LA. They were a bit afraid of being out in the dark. I could safely assure them there was nothing to worry about. In this new proposal even I would be afraid to walk around at dark. Please do NOT do this!!!!!!!!!593

I want you to consider why you want to approve this proposal? In our national parks? Really? When will this end? When does this start? You don't have a timeline at all for this process. I don't want to go to the Olympic Nat'l Park to hear jets overhead or to run into people simulating warfare in the park. There was an email recently that mentioned how many people were against this and yet you, our trusted servants are thinking about voting for it!!!! Why????? Do you get money from the Navy for voting for this proposal? Please come out with it if you do!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Why do you want to succumb every person and animal on the national parks to the noise and disruption from the growler jets???? It is disgusting what you are doing to our national parks!!!! Please vote against this proposal!!!594

As a native Washingtonian raised in Washington's coastal State Parks I was unaware that part of the purpose for the establishment of Washington State Parks was to promote military training (specifically Navy Seals), an activity seemingly MOST incongruous with the founding legislation enabling the establishment of Washington State Parks. As it turns out there NEVER was any provision in Washington State Law for military training activity in our State Parks, and Jay Inslee (of whom I normally hold great respect) knows it. The adage "What the Navy wants, the Navy gets..." holds no credibility in the minds of the vast majority of Washington State Park's visitors. Keep the Navy out!595

We are frequent visitors to many of the state parks on Island County and the Peninsula. Fort Casey, Dec Pass, Fort Ebey, Miller State Park, Fort Worden are our favorites. These state parks were established for recreation for families and visitors to relax and enjoy history, nature, hiking. Also, these parks provide habitat for many species of wildlife, some which are declining in population due to loss of habitat in surrounding areas, climate change or other factors. State Parks should not be used for military exercises of any kind. We need to guard the safety of visitors and the fragile habitats for wildlife. People come from all around the world to camp at our parks (pre-pandemic). People who are isolated in urban areas due to the pandemic come many miles to visit our parks to relax and find some peace and tranquility. The liability issues for accidents are glaringly obvious. But also, if visitors know they are unwillingly being used as targets or participants for military exercises, that spoils the whole experience. Maybe the Navy can use more of the hundreds of acres it already owns for these exercises with volunteers instead of using state park properties and visitors looking for serene, natural spaces for recreation.596
Please leave our public parks alone. The US Armed Forces have more than enough dedicated land to use for training and the people who live around high military activity areas like the Navy bases around Seattle already put up with enough traffic and noise. Our local wildlife and ecosystems are already threatened by many military exercises. Do not follow us to our parks where we go to find peace, do not further threaten the last untainted areas of wilderness and ecosystems that we have spent so many decades trying to preserve.

Though I certainly support the US Navy, I cannot fathom why it is so determined to use public parks for it’s training. Please consider other options and do not permit this activity in the parks.

The Navy or any military body should not be using state parks for trainings or any purpose. This is not why parks were created and given the amount of land our military owns it’s completely unnecessary. Would the parks be closed during trainings? Why would anyone want to take away a public space like this? Especially during a time when many are stuck indoors and isolated. If they aren’t planning to close the parks then I can guarantee that these “trainings” would have public interruption and would be frightening for any visitors. I am absolutely opposed to this!

This is my second submission because I want to make a further point. The parks are our living rooms during Covid and in all kinds of weather. It’s where we go to forest bathe (calm ourselves through walking among the beautiful big trees and the pungent smells of the earth), to hear the sound of silence, we go to make art, to get perspective, to teach our children to love this earth and not their devices, to hold hands with new lovers and maybe kiss in a grove off a path, to picnic, to be in the fresh air, to collect shells, to do public service through clean ups, to have church services, to be patriots enjoying the blessings of the freedoms of our country. Our parks are the people’s place. We share them with people who don’t agree with us politically but agree on beauty and love of country. There is NOTHING about military training in our parks that enhances these experiences. In fact, every one of them would be diminished if we thought somewhere nearby armed military personnel were training to make war on innocent people elsewhere. This country is torn apart now. We need to heal and nature is one of the best places to do that. Everyone agrees on beauty and our parks preserve the beauty of this country even as more is paved over and built up. I hope someone in some office somewhere reads this and feels in their hearts the sorrow I and many feel that our parks may be used for military training. IS NOTHING SACRED?

I strongly oppose the Navy using the citizen’s WA State Parks for their ‘war games’. My family frequents State Parks for recreation and respite. I can remember being at Deception Pass Park with out of state visitors when the Navy growlers flew by low which totally disrupted of a quiet time of reflection. WA State Parks are not meant for use by the military and should be reserved only for citizen’s use.

I write in opposition to “Naval Special Operations Training in Western Washington State” as outlined in the MDNS signed by Jessica Logan, EPM, on December 21, 2000.

My threshold question about this threshold determination is:

WHY is the Commission agreeing with this at all?

I don’t understand why we would agree to this, especially when the Federal government owns so much of its own land, including extensive shorelines, which could be used and damaged instead. It seems to be all cost and no benefit. Is Washington State being paid for this? Is there any quid pro quo? If not, why do it?
I am the Managing Partner of one of the longest established law firms on Whidbey Island, and live immediately next door to Ft. Ebey, where we basically raised our kids playing in the woods. As an attorney I am extremely concerned about the potential negative consequences of this program.

These range from destruction of our very fragile bluffs and shoreline flora and fauna, to the potential mental health damage it will do. Imagine when some poor soul’s “escape from Covid walk-in-the-woods” turns into a nightmare after they stumble into a violent group of scary looking soldiers emerging from the deeps wielding giant weapons.

Not just any soldiers. SEALS, the ones who killed Bin Laden, who might be shot themselves by some Second Amendment right wing nut trying to rescue us from invasion. (Just knowing that might possibly happen is enough to drive people around the bend.)

Kinda medically contraindicated for the public right now, doncha' think? Personally, even though this might look cool on TV, I prefer peace and quiet. I also enjoy undisturbed nature, you know, the kind the Parks are supposed to protect? This would ruin all of that; the very reasons parks exist in the first place would be usurped by war games.

But back to the initial question that must be asked:

Why are we agreeing to this invasive, potentially dangerous and destructive training at all? Have we no choice? Is “State's Rights” just a slogan? Is there a law or contract or something that requires us to allow this if there is a MDNS on file?

Then what is in it for Washington State, other than terrified citizens looking for peace and quiet in the woods and finding terror instead?

What is the quid pro quo? If there is none, then WHY AGREE TO THE TRAINING AT ALL?

For example, Assume your neighbor asked to use your yard for a giant paintball party for several dozen of his friends and promised to “avoid” ruining your property, would you conduct an impact statement or would you just say no?

And what if he will only agree to tell his buddies to “avoid” trashing your place, rather than agree that he “will not” or “shall not” destroy your place (which is the language lawyers and statutes actually use; avoid is a meaningless legal term, unless you are discussing “Last Chance Doctrine” in Torts).

And what if he did not agree that he will reimburse you for any damages his friends cause? Instead he says, “If we ruin your place you would be free to hire and pay for a lawyer and sue me.”

Would you say, “SURE! G'HEAD!!” ???

No. You would say, “Go Pound Sand”.

Or you MIGHT say, “Pay me $10K and I will agree.”

But would you conduct an environmental impact review and if it said it was ok would you just agree to said paintball party for no good reason whatsoever? Of course not!
Then why should Washington state?
It is All Cost, No Benefit Whatsoever.

IMPACTS

EXTENT OF NEGATIVE IMPACTS

Duration of Impact

The MDNS states: “36 times per year and for a maximum of 72 hours per training event.” In 28 parks.

36 possible training sessions x 3 days per session x 28 parks =

3024 DAYS OF POTENTIAL DAMAGE PER YEAR

This is a lot of time to “avoid” any possible problems.

Fragile Eco Systems

There is no way to predict, determine, monitor or inspect damage that might be done. Is the state going to assign scuba divers to inspect the sea bed before and after it is stomped all over by landing craft and heavy boots, Normandy style? No.

Is the State going to send out crews to inspect and repair the fragile vegetation and erosion plagued bluffs? No. WHO would pay for it?

TYPES OF NEGATIVE IMPACTS

Danger

The idea that people in camouflage are storming beaches at night with realistic looking guns scares the crap out of me. In this neighborhood that kind of behavior will get you shot.

And, Trust me, to quote a wise man, “someone is going to get hurt, someone is going to get shot, someone is going to get killed”. Which happened on a similar exercise where a SEAL was shot to death by local deputies who were told by concerned citizens that men with guns were sneaking around -- despite the military promising to notify local Law Enforcement about the exercise in advance. They apparently “forgot” and one of their own is dead as a result. Not good. Oh, and btw, the county had to pay out a huge settlement.

That alone, is reason enough to stop this from happening on State Parks’ land.

As I said, All Cost, No Benefit.

The Psychological Factor
This is perhaps the most significant problem. Plants grow back; mental health does not. This would potentially cause major psychological damage to local residents and tourists seeking an escape from this crazy world.

Look at the photos. My family has walked the trails of Ft. Ebey State Park for decades. My daughter dreams of getting married at one of our many favorite out of the way places inside the park. I have run every square inch of the park for a total of thousands of miles. I know it well. We know lots of hidden spots that are off the beaten track (exactly where the SEALS say they will be).

“Secret Fort”, “Grandfather Tree”, “Hidden Valley”, these are all names the kids gave to special places when they were little. Our son ran the trails like me and our daughter roamed around taking photos. Now he is a patent lawyer and she makes TV shows. The fact that the lawyer was also a NCAA athlete speaks volumes. They grew up in this park.

The physical and mental health benefits of being able to get away from the chaos and find peace and quiet nature is priceless.

Now, instead of finding solitude we find this:

DUTY OF CARE STANDARD

Simply put, there is NONE. Nothing is clearly prohibited. All they have to do is avoid wreaking havoc. That’s like a law that you have to avoid murdering people if you possibly can.

“Avoid”

“Avoid” is not “a thing” legally speaking. At least that is what they taught us at Stanford Law School. It is NOT a prohibition; it is a suggestion, and means absolutely nothing.

Monitoring and Enforcement

The only outside monitoring going on is being conducted by the military as they observe and monitor civilians. And tell them to leave the area if people get too close when they are on their “walks in the woods”, such as they are.

They also need to “monitor” the fragile flora and fauna. So?? I can “monitor” an old lady getting mugged, but that won’t do her much good, will it?

Same with Mother Nature.

Sanctions

There are NONE. That is unbelievable. If you drive your car over the speed limit you can be sanctioned, which helps prevent people from speeding. But if you destroy fragile ecosystems, terrorize small children, and destroy the peace and quiet and mental health of people like me, who
love the parks and practically live in one? Nara. Nothing. Other than what some Admiral reportedly said: “You are always free hire a lawyer and sue us under the Federal Torts Claim Act.”

Really? Are they going to pay for the legal fees for us? Will they roll over on a Summary Judgment Motion and provide Restitution to correct the damage and destruction caused by these exercises?

Hell no. Have you ever MET an Assistant US Attorney? I have. Have you ever tried a case in federal court against one? I have. They do NOT roll over. Ever.

ALTERNATIVES
The Federal government owns tons of land in this state including extensive coastal areas. Use that!

TIMING
One last point: Timing of the notice for public comment is suspect. The tiny little Notice card was sent out just a few short days before Christmas during a huge USPS slow down. Initially, comments were due just a few days after NYE. Do the math. It stinks to high heaven to all but the most trusting and naïve.

This project must not go forward.

I have stated my case. Please consider my input and make the right choice. Cancel the whole thing.

if not, I’ll see you all in court

Special military training goes against the spirit and principles of the state park system as originally intended. While I support the military and its vital role, expanding into state parks is not appropriate. Considering the amount of families, children etc and the fact that accidents can happen during any training operation (that’s why it’s called training) this is a serious risk. Additionally tourist activity may be further deterred due to potential of accident or simple perception of danger. The state parks are one of the rare places to gather during this global pandemic. They should be preserved as they are and not turned into military training facilities.

I respectfully request you deny The Navy’s request to conduct special operations training at 28 state parks. I use state park property daily for recreation, exercise, mental health and spiritual practices. Park property is inappropriate for military training as it interferes with all of these uses, yes even if I don’t actually see them! It is unacceptable to know that at any time Military personal might be hiding nearby as I use the park. I believe that state park property is meant for the general public to use in order to enjoy time in a natural setting, to preserve special natural features, plants or critters or to preserve historical sites. I don’t believe the military personnel will be paying attention to rare plants or the breeding/nesting times of the year. This all detracts from the state park property. The Navy has military bases that should be used for all military training. Training proposed by the Navy does not directly support the mission or vision of Washington State Parks. How much time of state park personnel is involved in considering this proposal and why money being spent on this rather than the operation and maintenance of the state park property? I object to the further intrusion into my public/personal life by the military. We need to be spending less time fighting each other. I am a regular park user. I have seen more people using state parks this year than ever before. I believe this is good. I think the time outdoors helps me to stay on the correct side of sane. With everything else going on in the US right now it is time to stand up and say no to the military use of state park
<table>
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<th>Combined Navy Comments- post 12-18-20</th>
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<tr>
<td>Property. How much is enough, how much is too much…. this request is too much. Please deny the request to use ANY of the state parks for military training.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am a retired Navy Vet (of 30 years) and a member of Kitsap Community for 20 years. I completely and 100% fully support the expanded use of Washington State Parks for Naval Special Warfare training. I have worked with NSW forces for many years and they are exceptional people willing to give it all for this country. They will and have laid their lives down for this country many times over. Anything we can do to support these brave men and women must be done. This training will help save the lives of these brave Americans and is vital to our national security. The waters of the Puget Sound and the diverse terrain of our state parks provide unique environments that cannot be replicated anywhere else in the United States. Having worked with NSW for many years, I know, firsthand that this training will be conducted safely with no adverse impact on the environment or the public. I ask that the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission support this request. When we have the opportunity to support these brave Americans, we must do everything possible for them and their families. These sailors ask for nothing and give everything in return. We must do whatever we can to help them out.</td>
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<td>I am sure we will all agree that members of the U.S. Navy are among the most highly trained elite forces in the U.S. military. They have achieved that elite status with the training and resources they currently have at their disposal. Those resources include the 46 miles of Puget Sound coastline that is already under their control. Why do they need to add 44 miles of State Park coastline? Personally, I live in Admirals Cove on Whidbey Island under the flight path of Navy growler jets doing flight carrier landing practice at Outlying Field Coupeville. The Navy intrudes on my peace and quiet in my own home several days a week for hours each of those days. Due to the noise, I cannot be outside my home, walk my dog, go for a run, take my kayak out, or even have a conversation on the phone. What do I do when it gets to be too much? I go to the parks. I go there to find the peace and quiet I cannot find at home. And, now, the Navy wants to take that away from me too! I do not want to go to the park and worry if there are troops hiding in the trees watching me and my family. That is intimidating and creepy. It takes away the feeling of peace, calm, and serenity I seek in the parks. Please, please, please keep the parks as a place of recreation for the public to enjoy!</td>
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<td>There are few places for people to go and experience the safe, relaxing atmosphere of our parks and reserves. It is not compatible with our military plans to use these parks. Just knowing that predators are hiding in the parks is enough to eliminate the enjoyment of the parks for many of our citizens. Please, please, please do not use our parks for military exercises. The military can purchase properties or use existing properties or make agreements with private property owners for these exercises.</td>
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<td>I was alarmed when I read on your website that &quot;Staff of the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission has issued a SEPA threshold determination for The United States (U.S.) Naval Special Warfare Command (NSWC) request to conduct special operations training at 28 state parks and found the proposal does not have a probable significant adverse impact on the environment.&quot; I would argue strongly that this proposal has enormous impact on our environment in the parks as a person who uses my South Whidbey parks and recreation areas often. I can’t get my mind around what you are even thinking with allowing MILITARY WARFARE GAMES AND TRAINING! in areas where community members (and especially children) are playing, hiking and generally using an area for that WHICH IT WAS INTENDED, namely outdoor exercise, enjoyment of nature and quietude. If you allow this ridiculous proposal to move forward, you will cause much harm and absolutely no good can come from this. DO NOT TAKE THE NAVY MONEY. DO WHAT YOU KNOW IN YOUR HEARTS IS RIGHT!</td>
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My family has been enjoying our State Parks for decades. We especially visit Whidbey Island Parks, and feel strongly that we should not have to worry about encountering the military. Calyx School has been using the Ranger Cabin at SW State Park, & the children & their families are opposed to Navy training in the Parks. We like Deception Pass State Park, but have often been annoyed by the Growlers. Thanks for your attention to our position on this issue.

I fully support expanding the use of Washington Parks. Naval special warfare needs good training grounds and the Washington Parks provide that. Their training shouldn’t hurt or damage the environment.

The Parks provide unique environments that cannot be replicated anywhere else in the United States. Puget Sound area provides a unique cold water environment for this training - including extreme tides and shifting currents.

The City of Oak Harbor City Council recently granted access for them to train in our marina. This training has been occurring without incident in five Washington State Parks per agreement with the Parks and Recreation Commission for decades. The purpose of the training is to approach land from the water, hide and remain undetected; leaving no trace of their presence.

The Navy will continue to abide by all environmental and safety regulations and will continue to exercise strict training policies to limit unintentional interaction with the public.

This specialized training is vital to their safety and our National Security. Please continue to allow this access.

Washington State Parks are for recreation for the residents of and visitors to our state NOT for Navy war games. Do not allow our state parks to become militarized zones.

I objection to the Commission allowing U.S. Navy Special Forces to practice Special Reconnaissance in Washington State Parks. The impact on us in our civilian Washington State Parks is a terrible idea that will breed fear in folks.

Do not allow even unannounced Special Reconnaissance in Washington State Parks.

Training for war in our state parks is not compatible with a peaceful environment and outdoor recreation. The dis-ease that will remain and be felt following war games on the grounds of our parks is very disturbing. Recreational areas are not to be used as mock war theaters. They are our places of peaceful beauty and are meant to be undisturbed as natural habitats. We go there for peace and comfort and rejuvenation. Deception Pass is currently being impacted by the navy Growlers, often overhead with overwhelming noise and disturbance. The Navy needs to train. The site(s) must be chosen with care and concern. It must be somewhere not associated with our public spaces. Please acknowledge the concerns of the general public to whom the parks belong as well as the neighborhoods surrounding these areas.

Enough already! The Navy jets are horrendous addition to our way of chose life- island life. Now to learn that the proposed 28 sites that the Navy seals wish to practice-are including 5 of our state parks. This shows an encroachment of our land- as if they are in complete control. Not so. State parks are to be used by the people and not have to worry about coming across those play acting military actions. true they need to practice, however they own a ton of property that includes waterfront- PLEASE reconsider and go there.

I oppose this covert training at our state parks. The purpose of our parks is for people to enjoy nature unfettered by the thoughts of being spied on by our troops.

My family and I use the state parks in Washington as a place to relax, have fun and enjoy nature. Allowing the military to use the parks for these exercises counters the intended uses of the parks. While I support the military and understand they have a need for training, there must be a way they can conduct their exercises without using state park property.
I don’t believe that these training exercises should happen in our Washington State Parks. They are an oasis of calm, peace and nature. I support our military but this is very upsetting to me. I daily go to our beaches parks to heal and feel peace. I do not want to have our parks used this way for training. Please find somewhere where families and children will not be exposed to this. Thank you for your consideration. Especially during these times of covid where the parks are one place safe to go and be outside.

JUST SAY NO TO MILITARIZATION OF WA STATE PARKS.

This proposal sounds a little creepy and I do not think that it is fair to park visitors. I would feel a little betrayed by the Commission if I found out later that when I visited one of the park that I was being spied upon by the military. There must be federal properties that could be used. I urge the Commission to deny this request.

I support the Navy Training in the parks.

Military training exercises are a disaster for Washington state parks! This is not an eco-friendly decision, not to mention an invasion of people’s privacy. With all due respect, I insist that Governor Inslee reject any proposals for training exercises in our state parks.

It is difficult for me to imagine why the proposal by the Navy to conduct clandestine training on our public beaches and parks is even under discussion. How would we the people benefit from this? I see only downsides to this activity: for the citizens attempting to recreate in our public park lands, for wildlife in the water and on land, and for the environment. All of this downside despite Navy assurance that they will do no damage. I live in Anacortes, and I can attest that Navy assurance of ‘no damage’ from noise resultant from the Whidby Island Naval Air Station is a lie. Almost daily growler activity from that base does severely intrude on my life. Being a heavy (and very appreciative) user of public parks and lands & also a senior citizen, I can tell you that being on a cliffside hike & bumping into a Navy trainee sporting full gear (including realistic weapons) would damage me, & might be the last time I get to appreciate such beauty. All of that, plus it is just so creepy, and not in a Halloween-tingle-my-spine way, but in a this-is-really-frightening way.

You, Commissioners, more than most citizens, know that the mission of WA State Parks is to “connect all Washingtonians to their diverse natural and cultural heritage and provide memorable recreational and educational experiences that enhance their lives”. If we are to be terrorized in those parks by military training exercises such as the Navy proposes, then where on earth do we go for those ‘memorable recreational and educational experiences’ meant to enhance our lives???

I say strongly that military training is completely inappropriate in parks, and at odds with this stated mission. I say strongly that military surveillance of citizens and brandishing of weapons (even simulated weapons) is the antithesis of this stated mission. Military training in public parks would lay ground for confrontations and accidents waiting to happen.

Please represent me and many thousands like me: deny the Navy proposal for military use of our precious park lands.

No! Military training in our State Parks is the antithesis of their purpose.

This email is in support of permitting the US Navy to conduct training exercises in Washington state parks.

I am a a lifelong Washington State resident who frequents Washington state parks. I have sea kayaked and scuba dived almost all Puget sound waters. I have read the scope of the permit requested by the Navy and I don't see any infringement of my ability to enjoy and use any of our state parks listed. In
my 60 years of using Washington State Parks, and traveling Puget sound waters, I have never been infringed upon, or experienced any anxiety related to the US Navy operations.

I hope the Washington State Parks commission can approach this permit request in a spirit of cooperation and alliance rather than taking a "not in my back yard" position. If I'm in trouble on the water and the coast guard is busy, I know the Navy will be there to assist me in my time of need. I hope we can be there for the Navy when they are requesting assistance from us.

As an American, I feel we should step up and support the men and women who put their lives on the line to protect us. If allowing their teams to utilize our parks will help them to keep the tip of the spear sharp, then we have an obligation as the protected to assist and support them in their mission.

I have attended a meeting on this topic where people were encouraged to complain about their "anxiety" about the navy conducting war games in our parks. They were encouraged to promote their anxiety because it was one factor that the parks commission could not mitigate. Given the scope of the covert training the Navy intends to do, I doubt that any citizen will see or realize that Navy training is happening around them.

As a life long resident of the Pacific Northwest, I have literally grown up in our state parks. My early childhood experiences camping in Oregon State Parks led me to become a professional mariner and wilderness guide. I am now a public school teacher. I live near Fort Worden Park, and I swim, paddle, and hike in our parks multiple times a week.

I can think of nothing more inappropriate then utilizing our state parks to EVER train for military operations. The Mission of Washington State Parks is to "Care for Washington's most treasured lands, waters, and historic places. State parks connect all Washingtonians to their diverse natural and cultural heritage and provide memorable recreational and educational experiences that enhance their lives."

Overlap of ANY training of the Navy and the public utilizing the State Parks is completely inappropriate, whether the public sees the trainees or not. Please protect our parks from this inappropriate training operation. I have traveled hundreds of miles of our coastlines and there are endless other places where this training could occur without impact on citizens trying to recreate in their state parks.

Thank you for protecting our parks. With much respect for the importance of training, the Navy absolutely needs to find a much more appropriate place for their operations.

I completely oppose the proposal for the Navy to use Washington State Parks. Essentially their intent is to USE THE VISITORS as part of a military staging. The Navy should use its own personnel to simulate training dummies, and should use unoccupied beaches at its bases. The Navy has already overstepped its respect for civilians in the Puget Sound region; with more Navy activity comes more surveillance to maintain the Navy's desired level of "security". This is a continuous downward slope of Naval occupation of civilian venues.

I have significant concerns about the Navy proposal to use Washington State Parks as a training ground. Beyond the obvious problem of disrupting wildlife and vegetation, some in critical areas, the idea of a military presence seemingly engaged in combat activities negates the whole purpose of a park: a natural environment in which to relax and feel safe. Especially in light of armed insurrectionists recently, it would be extremely fear inducing to see militarily dressed/armed personnel creeping through the bushes. They have the whole world to train in. Leave the parks to the
civilians who they were meant for. I don’t want to have to explain to my grandchildren why there are
seemingly armed soldiers sneaking around in the bushes. Parks Department should be for the People,
defending our right to a free and relaxing space where we don’t have to worry about a military
presence. Don’t allow this to take place.527

I urge you to keep our State Parks for their intended use of providing open natural areas for the
public’s use. Allowing the military to covertly use these spaces for military practices using off trail
areas for their maneuver’s will disturb wildlife as well as unsuspecting park users and is just plain
creepy. Do the right thing.528

This letter is written on behalf of the over 100,000 thousand Sierra Club members and supporters in
Washington State—and specifically our members in Whatcom, San Juan, Skagit, Island, Snohomish,
Jefferson, and Clallam counties—who are opposed to the Navy’s use of our parks for military training
exercises and believe Washington State Parks’ Determination of Non-Significance is both flawed and
ill-timed for the following reasons:

- The Navy Already Owns Miles of Washington Shorelines on Which to Conduct Training

Despite having more than adequate training facilities of its own, the Navy is planning to conduct
training exercises in dozens of Washington State Parks. As described in the Navy’s November 2019
Final Environmental Assessment, these exercises will take place at parks all over Puget Sound and the
outer coast, and may include units from the Army, Marines, Air Force, and Joint Special Operations
Command.

- Planned Training Exercises Will Restrict Public Access to Parks and Pose Risk of Injury to Persons,
  Property, and Wildlife

According to the Navy, planned training exercises can include as many as 84 personnel at a time in
beach landings, climbing bluffs, scaling rock walls, and hiding in the vegetation for up to 48 hours.
State Parks is proposing a Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance, despite this inappropriate use
of public recreational facilities, and the potential for conflicts and injury to property, the public, and
wildlife habitat.

In addition, the claim that there will be no monitoring of members of the public is not credible. While
Navy personnel are supposed to be interacting with advisors who are role-playing, they must also be
watching for potential interference from members of the public. There will also be another, separate
group of observers who will be patrolling in civilian clothes, and stopping members of the public who
encroach unwittingly on the exercise. Clearly, members of the public will be under observation and
their freedom of activity limited.

- State Parks’ Determination of Non-Significance is Contrary to Its Mission

State Parks’ determination of non-significance is contrary to its mission to “care for the State’s most
treasured lands, waters and historic places,” and would burden Park staff with more responsibilities
at a time when the State is furloughing staff and cutting back hours, and resources to maintain our
parks are inadequate. These exercises would inevitably lead to damage to foliage, trails, roads, and
wildlife habitat—especially if heavy equipment is used, which is an acknowledged possibility.

- Damage to Our Parks Will Be Impossible to Monitor and Taxpayers Will Foot the Bill
The Navy claims that it will notify law enforcement and park management before any training exercise. A Public Records Request reveals that it has never done so during the five years it has held a permit and there is no reason to believe it will do so now. This leaves State Parks’ staff unable to monitor such exercises and makes it more difficult to evaluate environmental impacts after the fact.

The Navy has further claimed that it will accept no liability and has no obligation to reimburse the State for any damages. The Admiral in charge has stated that “there’s always the Federal Tort Claims Act” by way of redress. This places an intolerable burden on our Parks and the taxpayers of Washington State. There is also the legal question of whether or not State Parks has the right to enter into an agreement where liability isn’t clearly defined or acknowledged.

While both State Parks and the Navy claim that they will “pay all applicable fees,” research demonstrates that the Navy is in fact exempt from those fees, so “all applicable fees” are likely to amount to precisely $0.00.

• The Navy’s Final Environmental Assessment Was Inadequate and Does Not Support State Park’s Determination of Non-Significance

The Navy’s Final Environmental Assessment (EA) is inadequate in its evaluation of potential damage to threatened or endangered sea life. The EA acknowledges that explosive devices may be set off in the water, with no investigation into the actual effects this could have on fish, amphibians, and marine mammals, other than a conclusion that there would not likely be damage. The effect of sonar and related technologies on sea life is also controversial and is the subject of continuing scientific investigation and concern. The Navy’s inadequate investigation of these effects on sea life is especially troubling considering the decline of the region’s Orca and Salmon populations and the growing consensus that climate change will only accelerate these trends.

• State Parks Has Failed to Consider The Impact on Public Health in Light of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that our State Parks are more important than ever to help people cope with the stress of the pandemic and its accompanying economic distress. Conducting military exercises in our parks at this time and limiting park access at a time when such access is most needed, represents the height of insensitivity to the health and well-being of Washington State residents.

For all these reasons, then, the Sierra Club opposes granting of a “Right of Entry” Permit to the US Navy for the proposed training exercises, and suggests to the Navy that it find appropriate locations along its existing 46 miles of Washington shoreline in which to conduct its training.

We appreciate this opportunity to comment and look forward to your reconsideration of this ill-advised proposal by the Navy.

I strongly object to the proposal to allow the Navy’s Special Warfare Command to conduct training exercises in our State Parks. Why would anyone think that war games would be appropriate in a public recreation area. I would find their presence to be extremely frightening especially at night. I do not want Navy Special Forces creeping around my tent! Do not use public recreational areas to train for armed combat!
I am writing to provide comments on the SEPA Checklist and Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance for the proposed use of public State Parks in Western Washington for use as military training facilities by the Navy. These comments were prepared by certified planner and shared with me to help support my objection to the use of the Western Washington State Parks by the U.S. Navy for training exercises.

Below are the specific comments as related to the SEPA checklist

SEPA Checklist Dated March 11, 2020

Background A.6. and A.11. – The proposal is inconsistent with the mission and vision contained within the 2021-31 Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission Strategic Plan. In particular, the proposal conflicts with Goal 1 of the Strategic Plan – Customer Experience. This goal states that State Parks are “places for rest, reflection, enjoyment and exploration.” By allowing military training exercises as described in the proposal, the public’s ability to peacefully recreate in the affected State Parks will be significantly impaired. According to the information provided in the checklist training activities located in Region 1 could occur up to 36 times per year for a maximum duration of up to 72 hours per training event. This equates to a potential of 108 days per year during which the Navy would be able to make use of public State Park lands under the requested permit. Given the vague nature of the description, it would be impossible to know when or where these activities would occur and there is no requirement for public notification. As described, between 26 and 20 support personnel would be involved in each training activity. Presumably, these support personnel would be present in the State Park areas also occupied by the public, and would need to use the roadways and public facilities that would otherwise be used by members of the public who are there to enjoy peaceful recreation. The proposal states that the topographical configurations of the included State Park lands are necessary to provide adequate training environments. The Navy already owns land that meets this criteria, and that could be used for training, without infringing on the quiet enjoyment of public State Park lands. In addition, the Navy proposes to use paintball guns (i.e. simulated weapons that use water-soluble paint pellets) and drones (i.e. unmanned aircraft systems) during land-based exercises, which are significantly at odds with the use of State Parks as stated in the Commission Strategic Plan.

7. Environmental Health
   a. – The types of vehicles and hazardous materials proposed to be used, and potential for environmental impacts, in the training exercises are incompatible with the environmental stewardship purposes of the State Parks. The proposal states that the presence of existing military equipment in Western Washington State means that no change would occur in the types of hazardous waste produced. This statement does not acknowledge that military equipment and military materials, that are described as needing to be stored in HAZMAT lockers, are not currently present the State Parks. 7.
   b. Noise – The generation of intermittent noise from vehicles and simulated weapons is inconsistent with the peaceful enjoyment of the State Parks and would create noise impacts to nearby sensitive receptors. The proposal indicates that the noise from diesel engines traveling through adjacent neighborhoods to deliver equipment and personnel to the State Parks training sites would generate intermittent noise, as would the sound of simulated munitions. Intermittent noise can be even more disruptive to sensitive receptors, such as those using the State Parks or living nearby, than constant noise in some cases. In any case, this is noise that does not exist today and it should not be introduced at all.

8. Land and Shoreline Use
a. through l. – The proposed military training activities are not compatible with the designated land uses of each of the listed State Parks and would result in a change of land use that is inconsistent with the existing zoning and Comprehensive Plan designation for each State Park. The proposal mischaracterizes the military training exercises as consisting of people “swimming in the water, moving across the beach, and walking on and off trails.” This description is wholly at odds with the descriptions of the military training exercises detailed in previous sections of the SEPA checklist. The zoning designations for each of the affected State Parks, and the areas surrounding them, are primarily Recreation or Rural Residential. The proposed activities are consistent with those found in a military base, which are completely incompatible with Recreation and Rural Residential land uses. The zoning for Fort Worden State Park is incorrectly listed as “higher density residential on small city lots.” The City of Port Townsend zoning designation for the properties adjacent to Fort Worden are R-1 and R-2 Single Family residential zones.

14. Transportation

a. The proposal would include the use of lightly-traveled, sometimes remote and/or residentially-serving roads for the transportation of military personnel and equipment in convoys sufficient to support up to 34 military personnel and additional training equipment. This would create an impact on these roads and in the communities through which they run. The road serving Fort Worden State Park is mischaracterized as being Eisenhower Road. This road is an internal circulation road within the State Park that does not have access outside the park. Fort Worden State Park is accessed via W Street at the intersection of Cherry Street. This is the only vehicular access to the park. Cherry Street is a narrow street that runs through a residential neighborhood and is not suitable for military convoys. The designated route to the park is Redwood Street, though it too is a small residential street that is not suitable for military convoys. Washington State Parks and Recreation Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance Dated December 21, 2020 The mitigations required to ensure that the proposed use of public State Parks for military training exercises does not cause adverse environmental impacts are extensive and largely unenforceable. There are no mitigations proposed for the proposal’s inherent incompatibility with existing State Parks Commissions Strategic Plan, nor for the inconsistency with the existing land use designations.

B.4 – Plants – The mitigation measures only state that sensitive areas should be “avoided.” This language is not substantial enough to ensure that sensitive plant species will be protected. The mitigation measure requires that Navy staff monitor for the presence of listed state and federal species, but it does not place any requirement on the expertise of the Navy staff member. Will this be a biologist who is trained to identify listed plants? How will this mitigation measure be enforced?

B.5 – Animals – The mitigation measures only state that sensitive areas should be “avoided.” This language is not substantial enough to ensure that sensitive plant species will be protected. The mitigation measures refer to listed state and federal “species.” This should be changed to “species.” The mitigation measure requires that Navy staff monitor for the presence of listed state and federal species, but it does not place any requirement on the expertise of the Navy staff member. Will this be a biologist who is trained to identify listed animals? How will this mitigation measure be enforced? Will Navy staff be required to submit a training schedule to State Parks staff to ensure that training is occurring outside of nesting times and sites?

B.12 – Recreation – The mitigation measures allow for the use of simulated weapons, though they may not shoot projectiles as referenced in the Navy’s proposal. The carrying of simulated weapons is inconsistent with the quiet enjoyment of State Parks. Vehicle ingress and egress is exempt from the exclusion areas and the mitigation measure states that the vehicles must be on park roadways and designated parking areas at all times. Given that the training exercises will involve up to 34 personnel and an unspecified number of vehicles for as long as 72 hours at a time, how will State Parks ensure that civilian Park users will not be displaced from public facilities? How will “observers and safety
personnel intervene” in the event that a “non-participant” discovers the training exercise? Why is there no requirement for public notice that a training exercise will be occurring? The overall nature of these mitigation measures are too vague and unenforceable, and will ensure that unsuspecting civilians will be unwittingly involved and/or impacted by the proposed military training exercises. Based on this analysis, I respectfully request that the Commission deny the application for the permit that the Navy is seeking that would allow them to conduct special operations training in Western Washington State Parks.531

I welcome and support the US military to use the parks for training! Training is integral for the safety of our nation and poses no risk to those using the parks.631

The Navy’s proposed war games on Washington State Parks should be rejected outright. These Natural places are refuges for many plant and animal species, as well as the human visitors who seek unspoiled environments. I have witnessed the unintended consequences of this kind of abuse. I worked for several years as Forest manager in Anacortes Community Forest Lands, in the 1980s and 90s, and on one occasion observed Sheriff deputies practicing rescue skills on fragile moss and wildflower meadows atop cliffs at Whistle Lake. Their activities wiped out 100 years of plant growth in an hour, and those meadows have not recovered since. Parks are intended to preserve these special ecologies, and allowing military maneuvers to damage and destroy them is antithetical to the public service they were created to provide. Especially the very special parks like Deception Pass must remain protected from abusive human activities.633

As a recently retired Navy SEAL, after 25 years of service, I can honestly say that this type of training is vital to help save the lives of our brave Americans who fight for our safety and freedom every day. I fully support the expanded use of Washington State Parks for Naval Special Warfare training. This training will help save the lives of these brave Americans and is vital to our national security. The waters of the Puget Sound and the diverse terrain of our state parks provide unique environments that cannot be replicated anywhere else in the United States. I believe that this training will be conducted safely with no adverse impact on the environment or the public. I ask that the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission support this request.634

I am writing to express my STRONG OBJECTION to the Navy Training proposal in the Washington State Parks. Having grown up just steps away from Fort Ebey, I cannot even begin to imagine how detrimental this could be for all of our parks. The Navy has plenty of areas to train elsewhere in the state that would not directly impact public parks that are specifically designed for the public to have uninterrupted access and enjoyment of our surrounding nature and wildlife. From what I have gathered from the proposal, they are not any actual restrictions on the potential harm and disruption caused by the training. Instead, wording like “avoid, minimize or mitigate probable significant impacts” is used to persuade locals into thinking the parks will be safe and preserved...instead of putting measures in place to guarantee the parks are NOT disturbed in any way. Not to mention the fact that the trainees will be using “replica weapons.” Seeing as they cite they will stop trainings if and when the public enters the area, can you picture how terrifying it would be to see a group of military personnel brandishing weapons of any kind, while on a nature walk with your family!? The fact that they would be allowed to use the parks for almost half of the year, with seemingly few regulations and rules to follow, there is absolutely no way this should be allowed. The nature and parks of Washington is part of what makes our state so incredible. And if you’re being shallow enough to only considering the financial gain of the permit costs from these trainings, consider the negative impact this will have on tourists who travel in to hike and adventure into the parks, only to have their peace interrupted by military presence. I know for a fact I am in the majority of citizens who agree this should not be permitted.635
I feel it is perfectly acceptable for the Navy to use our parks for the specialized training outlined in their proposal. These activities will not harm the environment and due to the nature of the training they will go unnoticed for the most part. The use of this type of environment provides invaluable training opportunities for our military forces. The environmental impacts of these training operations will be much less than the average citizen who visits the park. As such, I fully support approval of the U.S. Navy’s proposed training operation in our parks.

Horrible idea! The idea of having people creeping around in the park spying on others is WRONG! Second, I don’t carry a gun but it’s not beyond imagining to see this end badly on some dark night.

I strongly object to the Navy’s proposal to use our State Parks for training. The state parks are for the benefit and enjoyment of the people and for the care of the natural beauty and wildlife. The Navy’s proposal does not meet the standard and needs to be rejected, furthermore:

• Allowing the Navy to use any State Park for training would further militarize our society.
• The Navy has plenty of other places to train.
• There is very real potential for harm to result from the activities the Navy is proposing.
• Trainees will be carrying realistic looking fake weapons. This would clearly be problematic in our parks, where weapons are not allowed.
• Having military training activities in our parks is inconsistent with the mission, vision, and core values of the State Park system.
• Having military training activities in our parks is inconsistent with State Park regulations.

I am opposed to allowing military training in any of our public parks! This practice is in opposition with the mission and regulations of our State Park system and puts public safety at risk. The Navy has sufficient land to practice spying with realistic looking weapons without putting actual civilians who are uninformed in harms way. Military training in our public parks does not meet the stated goals for parks to care for state resources and provide recreational access to the public. Please do not allow this proposal to go forward. In closing the public parks are we the people NOT for military training!

I am opposed to the use of Washington State Parks for military training for the following reasons:

1) Such an incursion does not support the mission of Washington State Parks.
2) We were powerless to stop the Navy Seals from using federal parks here in my home state. That should have been enough. Please leave our state parks alone. What’s next? County and city parks for military training?
3) The US military owns a lot of real estate in Washington State, including numerous bases and training areas. Use these properties for training and leave our state parks for the enjoyment of humans and wildlife.

Let the Navy train it’s been happening for years anyway. Seattleites shouldn't be controlling this stuff they're pushing to keep regular people out of our parks already keeping them for the Elite. Let the Navy train!

Fort Townsend State Park is located practically in our backyard, so it is the state park with which I am most familiar. I wish to express my concern for its welfare as a special biological place when used for Naval training exercises.

Though I have no idea how those exercises may manifest themselves, I am greatly concerned about the sensitive shoreline of the park, a precious eelgrass ecosystem for fish, sealife, mammals, and birds. The recent restoration of the shoreline to its more appropriate original and natural state would be threatened by any incursions.
The trails in the park are narrow in many places and strictly appropriate only for people on foot. Even stepping off the trail seems a dangerous encroachment on the sometimes rare and vulnerable plants growing there. This park is a unique, natural place. I am against anything that has the potential to disrupt or damage it. For our state, Fort Townsend State Park is a treasured resource that deserves to be vigorously protected not exploited. Thank you so much for all your work on behalf of our state parks and for your consideration of my comments.

I live in Whatcom County and I am probably in one of the State parks on a weekly basis. I enjoy walking, paddling, hiking and biking and find each of our state parks have their own unique environment and qualities. I live near both Larrabee State Park and Birch Bay State Park. Day trips have taken me to Deception Pass, Moran, Fort Ebey and I could go on because I have visited over 35 State Parks in the last 10 years. Even while living near these I have had the opportunity to camp in them which affords the time to be among the trees, walk the beaches and just rest in the quiet and solitude of the natural environment. I also spend time on days. Lastly, when thinking about vacations we spend every summer visiting at least two different parks; this year it was Mount Pilchuck and Ocean City.

I find the State Parks’ determination of nonsignificance for the Naval Special Operations Training in Washington State Parks RCW 42.30.080 Item E-1 offensive to those of us who visit the parks for peace, quiet, solitude as well as recreation. I fail to see how allowing the military to stage enactments of combat missions enhances or contributes to those visiting the park. In addition, I am also worried about what harm these maneuvers to the parks’ environment will be done. The wildlife, trails, foliage will be even more heavily impacted than they are now. I personally do not want to meet anyone in camouflage with a gun down the same trail I am on. If we are shut out of the park because of training I will not be very happy when my 4 days of vacation in the park gets shortened or stopped altogether. The Navy has stated it accepts no liability for damage and the state must go through a Federal Tort Claims Act. The parks are already suffering from revenue lost from Covid as well as losses of jobs. This is placing an undue burden on staff which should not happen particularly during the challenging times we are living in now and the near future.

Then, there is the reason why the Navy wants to expand the use of State Parks from 5 over the last five years to 28 along Puget Sound and the Pacific Coast during the next phase of training. There was no reason or rationale given for this large increment. The Navy, as well as our other armed forces have many acres of their own for training, why do they need to use 28 of our State Parks? Lastly, but not least is the Navy’s evaluation of potential damage to threatened or endangered sea life. They acknowledge that explosive devices may be set off in the water. We have had documented proof that in the past whales have died and washed up on the shoreline with their eardrums blown out from sonar and explosives. (Footnote below) Investigation and scientific evidence must be submitted into the actual effects of sonar technology and blasts could have on fish, amphibians, and marine mammals before any authorization should be given. The Navy’s inadequate investigation of these effects on sea life is very troubling considering the decline of the region’s Orca and Salmon populations. I am shocked that this activity is being considered in light of the millions of dollars that the State, our taxpayer monies, has spent on the recovery of Salmon and Orca.

Please reject this proposal or at the very least conduct a full Environmental Review (EIS) of this project. Our parks are our wealth and our connection to nature do not militarize them.

Footnote: In fact, it is that reactionary nature that becomes so dangerous in sonar situations. Numerous long-term studies have shown that when marine life is impacted by intense sound waves, it can disrupt breeding and feeding patterns, and even migrations. Military Sonar And Its Effect On Whales » Science ABC www.scienceabc.com/nature/animals/military-sonar-and-i... Navy Settles Suit
I am writing to strongly object to the use of any State or National Park in Washington for training purposes by the US Navy or any other branch of the military.

Here is the Mission Statement, Vision and Core Values of the Washington State Parks as noted on the WA State Parks website:

**MISSION**
The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission cares for Washington’s most treasured lands, waters, and historic places. State parks connect all Washingtonians to their diverse natural and cultural heritage and provide memorable recreational and educational experiences that enhance their lives.

**VISION**
Washington’s state parks will be cherished destinations with natural, cultural, recreational, artistic, and interpretive experiences that all Washingtonians enjoy, appreciate, and proudly support.

**CORE VALUES**
The agency has adopted the following core values:

- Commitment to stewardship that transmits high quality park assets to future generations
- Dedication to outdoor recreation and public enjoyment that welcomes all our citizens to their public parks
- Excellence in all we do
- Involving the public in our policy development and decision making
- Support for one another as we translate our mission into reality

Military training operations are IN NO WAY COMPATIBLE with the core functions of State Parks as "cherished destinations with natural, cultural, recreational, artistic, and interpretive experiences that all Washingtonians enjoy, appreciate, and proudly support."

Also very disturbing is the Navy's proposal to "stalk" unwitting park visitors as part of this training. This is beyond creepy, should this proposal be adopted how are private citizens supposed to enjoy their public lands without fear? The military already receives more than its fair share of our tax dollars. The US Navy owns plenty of land to be used for training, as do the other branches of the Military. This proposal MUST NOT be implemented.

The State Parks system is funded primarily by user fees. The US Navy does not contribute to the State Parks System as far as I can tell and has zero claim on using publicly funded lands for military games. Park Revenues would drop enormously if private citizens are being stalked on recreational trips. How could we feel safe taking our children camping? This is a terrible idea and must be stopped in its tracks. I will be sending my comments on to the Governor as well as the rest of my elected officials.

The US Navy is already abusing the Olympic National Forest and Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve with a huge uptick in Growler Flights. We must protect our public lands and preserve them for public enjoyment and not for military war games.
State parks belong to the people not to the Navy. Letting the Navy use our parks for their training is a deplorable idea. People’s parks and the military are two separate entity's. Please do not co-mingle the Navy and state recreation.

Our public parks are intended to be places of peace and respite. Military exercises, including surveillance of citizens and brandishing of weapons (even simulated weapons) is the antithesis of this. Quite simply, these activities represent confrontations and potentially tragic accidents waiting to happen. Covert military training in public spaces must be prohibited.

Opposition to Proposal to Train Navy Seals at 29 WA State Parks.

I have read Rear Admiral SD Barnett’s Letter to State Parks 12.4.2020.
I have endured much hours of the Washington State Parks Commission meeting 11.19.2020

I strongly oppose this proposal.

1. Per one commissioner, “State Parks mission does not include training ground for military operations. Seal training does not appear to directly support the mission of State Parks.”

I totally agree with this statement.

2. Outreach to the public has been virtually nonexistent.
   a. Except: outreach to the state parks commission and Native American tribes who owned this land is totally appropriate.
   b. Outreach to campers who use the state parks and donors to the Washington State Park Foundation has been nonexistent. I am both a donor and a camper and I have received zero notification of this plan.
   c. Outreach to taxpayers who support the state parks has not occurred. I am a taxpayer. I subscribe to and read the Seattle Times daily and have seen no articles on this proposal. The entire process seems to have been designed to keep the public ignorant and uninvolved. An opportunity for public comment is meaningless without public knowledge of the proposal. This is unacceptable.

3. With all due respect to Washington state parks biologists, they are not the only ones studying marine and intertidal plants and animals. Has there been outreach to community college and university researchers? To the marine science center at Friday Harbor? To conservation organizations like the Audubon society?

4. There will be a Navy observer present to monitor respect for the environment at each training. I am skeptical. At night? A biologist? This amounts to “Trust us to do no harm.”

5. How will this proposal by the US Navy affect nesting, resting and feeding sources for our pelagic and shorebirds? As you should know, pelagic birds and salmon feed on Pacific herring, sand-lance and surf smelt which spawn on eelgrass and upper intertidal sand and gravel. These foods are also critical to orca. The areas of the park that are least used by Park visitors and proposed as sites for Navy training provide the best areas for the food chain that support these plants and animals.

State Parks are special places for the public to escape the stresses of life and enjoy the beauty and peacefulness of nature. the parks should not be used for military training exercises. The Navy has many areas owned by the Navy and/or federal government. Please leave the parks alone to be used for the purposes they were actually created for.

I understand the Navy’s need for training. But I am concerned that the finding that this proposal has no significant environmental impact is wrong. Many of our parks that border the Puget Sound have steep hillsides leading up from the water. Trainees will be presumably climbing those hills with equipment that will put extra strain on fragile hillsides. PLEASE include a restriction that the Navy
<table>
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<th>Training avoid those steep and/or fragile areas. When their training is complete, their presence should not have damaged the park.</th>
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<td>I could not believe it when I read that our military wants to use our beloved state parks for military practice! Our parks are cherished by everyone, partly because they feel safe and provide an opportunity to commune with nature. If the military were hiding or rushing about on those lands, that feeling of safety would end immediately! Animals would be forced to leave their homes to find more protected spaces. Plants would be trampled. The quiet solitude that allows for listening and watching birds would be destroyed. At South Whidbey State Park, near my home in Langley, an unusual school exists - Calyx - that brings children, learning and nature together in a unique way. If there were any concerns about children’s safety, Calyx would surely cease to exist. I am nearly 70, a first grade teacher at South Whidbey Elementary School, a bird lover and walker. I meet my friends to walk, often at South Whidbey State Park. Since the park is no longer used as a campground, the park’s roads are smooth and gentle for older walkers like me and my friends. The park contributes greatly to my personal health and well-being. Please do not allow any parks, especially South Whidbey State Park, to be used and abused by our military. It is there for all the South Whidbey community to love and enjoy.</td>
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<td>I stand against the proposed Navy use of our parks for any activity. Parks are places where people can go for recreation, peace and quiet and to reduce stress. I believe that is especially true during this pandemic when people are going outdoors more and can be in a place to keep safe social distances. I also believe the Navy has other places they could use for practice. Maybe an island somewhere away from our State Parks. We have put up with the terrible noise from the Growlers and now this. Come on, the Washington State Parks belong to the people of Washington, not the Navy.</td>
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<td>I object to the Navy’s proposal to use state parks for their training purposes. For adults and children who are in our parks for an experience of the natural environment and its quiet beauty to encounter troops unexpectedly could be both traumatic and extremely disruptive. Not to mention an incursion into privacy which people expect when in parks. To use the state parks for this purpose is at odds with the mission and purposes for which they were created. The Navy already has more than sufficient waterfront under its control to conduct these exercises and accomplish their goals. Further, their plans could definitely impact sensitive areas by damaging plant life and disrupting habitat.</td>
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<td>I am opposed to the Navy using state parks for training. This is counter to the purpose of the parks to be welcoming and comfortable for the public. War games have no place in our parks.</td>
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| To: Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission PO Box 426501111 Israel Rd. SW Olympia, WA 98054 
RE: Naval Special Operations Training in Western Washington State 
This is a comment on SEPA Checklist and Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance (MDNS) for the proposed use of public parks in Western Washington by Navy Military training operations. I am respectfully and strongly opposed to the military using public State Parks for training for the following reasons. The military has its own designated properties for exactly these purposes. The proposed “mitigations” are unenforceable and civilians will have no recourse. This sets a dangerous precedent. Military training and outdoor civilian recreation are mutually exclusive. The military’s record of creating environmental superfund sites is legendary. There is already a rapidly growing and excessive military presence here. It has impinged on the community’s peace and quiet in the past year. Especially now, during a pandemic, the need to have places that are restful and quiet to escape the very real stressors we are facing for survival is enormous. Adding a military presence is not consistent with Washington State Park and Recreation’s goals and mission. More specifically, referencing SEPA... |
checklists 03/11/2020: Background A.6 and A.11. The proposal clearly conflicts with the WA State Parks Recreation Commissions goals and visions of providing “places of rest, reflection, enjoyment and exploration”. The proposal indicates the military can use the parks up to what equates to 108 days per year, almost a staggering 1/3 of the year (Region 1: 36 times with each session lasting up to 3 days). The activity will bring increased Navy personnel and vehicles (diesel fumes) into our parks. People seek out the parks for solitude, nature and fresh air. The use of paintballs and drones carries potential for injury to civilians, and definitely an aggravating and nerve wracking presence. Many community members and tourists alike will avoid the parks! Our business rely on tourists.

Environmental Health a.- The hazardous materials and types of vehicles used impacts the environment. This is directly contrary to the mission of environmental stewardship expressed by State Parks. As mentioned earlier, the military’s record of creating Superfund sites, speaks for itself. Citizens will have no recourse from adverse health effects on flora and fauna (this includes humans).

Environmental Health b. Noise- We are already bombarded with Navy jets, day and night. Adding drones, and the increased noise of diesel vehicles on our roadways adds to stress levels. Excessive noise has been documented to affect a child’s IQ scores and subsequent ability to learn which impacts lifetime earnings and security.

7. Land and Shoreline Use a. through l. – Military training is incompatible with State Parks’ land use and existing zoning of R-1 and R-2 that surrounds Fort Worden. Changing zoning to meet military needs would essentially turn our parks over for military uses and is unacceptable, setting a dangerous precedent.

14. Transportation a.- There are only 2 roads directly leading into Fort Worden and the proposal that up to 34 military personnel, plus their equipment and support staff will only be using “lightly-traveled” roads, is false. It is only true if you are comparing it to Seattle, Boston or NYC. The impacts of increased traffic on residents of the direct roads into Fort Worden will be very sorely felt. I can attest to that personally.

Addressing Washington State Parks and Recreation MDNS 12/21/2020: Environmental mitigation for the military is and has historically been completely unenforceable. How do you “mitigate” the interruption of a community’s and a country’s “quiet enjoyment” of their precious State Parks, the use of which has skyrocketed during the pandemic? More specifically: B.4- Plants-Mitigation measures that use words such as “sensitive areas are to be avoided” does not protect plants that have been trampled or disrupted which will invariably occur. B.5- Animals—Mitigation to avoid sensitive areas for state and federal species is too vague and unenforceable. Will each military service member be an expert in fauna species identification on how their presence impacts those species? Who will ensure this actually happens?

B.12- Recreation-Mitigation for use of simulated weapons, increased vehicles, increased military personnel—how do you mitigate the ensuing discomfort of civilians in this community? How do you mitigate community members and tourists that can no longer use their parks for recreation and quiet enjoyment because those parks have been co-opted by the military? If an accident occurs involving hazardous leaks into the environment or civilians are injured—what’s the plan? What’s the “enforcement” of any plans given the military’s historical context? Thank you for your time. I hope you will carefully consider the level of community unrest that this proposal has caused.

State Parks mission does not include training ground for military operations. Public outreach has been virtually non-existent. Opportunity to comment is quite difficult to find, and has apparently been eliminated from the 12.22.2021 "Public Meeting". 79 pages of comments, roughly 11 comments per page, have been received as of 12.18.2021. Virtually none support the proposal. It is challenging to find this comment page. I see no benefit to the public of this proposal. Will the Navy allow the public to enter and camp at will on its property? These parks are public property and my husband and I strongly oppose this proposal.
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<tr>
<th>I do NOT the use of state parks for Navy training. I'm particularly concerned about disturbing nesting seabirds. What about concern over native plants? I strongly feel that state parks should be for use by the public and not the Navy.</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Thanks for taking comments. Mine are brief. I see absolutely NO REASON to justify the Navy using public parks for their military training operations. I appreciate their ‘wish and request’ to use our public facilities for the reasons they list. But those reasons hold, with all due respect, little value when compared with the solace, peace, privacy, wonder, intimacy, education, etc., that is always provided by the ever limited public parks. The Navy claims that their operation will be unnoticed. The vibration of military maneuvers and Navy presence may never be measured, but will be detected/sensed by many, perhaps as a strange uneasiness in their favorite park space. Clearly, the USA has military bases across the globe, on every continent, in every imaginable eco system. With a budget that absorbs 50% of our federal taxes, surely the Navy can find suitable location for this training, other than ‘sacred to many’ public parks. And using unaware citizens as ‘guinea pigs' for this stealth training appears Orwellian in nature. Were the shoe on the other foot, the military would not support clandestine citizens surreptitiously sneaking around military bases. Sounds absurd, but public parks are for nature and human rejuvenation, not for games of 'you never saw me, but I saw you.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These are very scary times. We have right wing people scaring quiet citizens who may be forced to take up arms. It its a ridiculous time for the Navy to assault our parks with secret training. Not only would an encounter be frightening to a citizen, the SEALS may die.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am writing to say that I adamantly oppose the Navy’s plan to insert trainees into the parks to observe and stalk simulated human targets – us. The Navy specifically wants to use our parks, instead of their own military reservations, because they want to use civilians as props. This is completely UNACCEPTABLE. Our state parks are for peaceful civilian use and are essential for public health, especially now with the Covid pandemic. Congress has provided the military with millions of acres reserved solely for training purposes. Putting military trainees, with realistic looking weaponry, in close proximity to unaware civilians is a recipe for deadly conflict. In North Carolina a deputy sheriff killed one and seriously wounded another military trainee in a similar situation. And who pays in the event of a tragedy? We do. In the North Carolina case the local county had to pay out $750,000 in damages. Our state and local governments are already under dire financial distress. Our parks must remain civilian. This is a terrible idea. Please reconsider this proposal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I strongly urge the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission to reject the Navy’s proposal to conduct special operations in State Parks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These exercises unnecessarily compromise the safety of park visitors — without their knowledge or consent — as well as that of military personnel. A perceived threat could easily lead to a tragic outcome even when military personnel are unarmed, similar to the 2002 incident in North Carolina.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In addition to safety concerns, these exercises place visitors under surveillance — again, without their knowledge or consent. Visitors have a reasonable expectation that they can enjoy our parks without being surreptitiously watched by military personnel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military training belongs on military facilities — not in our parks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I fully support the Navy's training proposal on Washington State Parks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please, please, do not use our state parks for navy training. Any kind of training in the waters will be disruptive - especially to native tribal areas. There must be some other way. Thank you for your consideration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The five state park properties in Jefferson County are for public use. They should be available at all times for use by the public. They are currently used by the public for hiking, recreation, picnicing, special public events and other public uses.

- The core values of the Washington State Parks includes dedication to outdoor recreation and public enjoyment of our public parks, and also states that Washington State parks are a key part of Washington communities and integral to the recreation, enjoyment and health of all residents.
- These parks were never set aside for military training and should not be used for this. It would set a precedent that could lead to military takeover of our state parks, when they are intended for and dedicated to public use.
- Unintended consequences may be expected as a result of military training, such as nuisance noise, public disturbances and potential injury to the public.


I fully support the expanded use of Washington State Parks for Naval Special Warfare training. This training will help save the lives of these brave Americans and is vital to our national security. The waters of the Puget Sound and the diverse terrain of our state parks provide unique environments that cannot be replicated anywhere else in the United States. I believe that this training will be conducted safely with no adverse impact on the environment or the public. I ask that the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission support this request.

I am very concerned about the navy doing training in our state parks. Parks are used for recreation and a peaceful release from the bustle of life. With no schedule posted or required, those leisure spaces could be intruded upon at any time. That is not ok. I don't like the parks being used for that purpose because it is detrimental to a beautiful place and I especially don't like it with no notification to the community. We live very near South Whidbey State Park and visit multiple times a week. I also don't think it's ok to disregard safe distances from whales and other wildlife.

OUR parks - overreach by the Navy and dereliction of duty by the Commission if this goes through.

we want our Naval Special Warfare Command to conduct special operations training to continue to protect our state.

I strongly object to the Navy’s plan to use WA state parks for military training purposes. Such training would make the parks unavailable for use by residents - which was the intend of creating the parks in the first place. It also has a strong potential to harm wildlife and the ecosystems on which they depend. This is a terrible misuse of our parks system. I strongly recommend that this proposal be denied.

The recent increase in Navy Growler practice flights is having a negative impact on humans and wildlife. The amount and duration of practices has expanded to a level that is no longer safe. We have a home on Whidbey Island near Crockett Lake/ Coupeville and the impact of the increased flights has now become a health and safety issue for everyone that lives, works or visits the area. We understand the need to practice but now feel that the increase in number and duration of flights including at night has changed the situation. Please consider reducing the number of flights and looking at alternative paths. The impact to the protected wet lands and birds is considerable.

WA State law is specific about the type of activities that allowed in WA State parks. Military training and war games are NOT allowed activities in any park. We have recently seen the consequences in our national capitol when military-style thinking infects groups of fellow citizens. Militarization of our
Combined Navy Comments- post 12-18-20

public spaces is a clear danger to our democratic systems. I implore you to reject the use of State parks for military exercises.\(^{671}\)

I strongly object to any military use of public recreational land. The military has vast tracts of land at their disposal for "practice". Civilian recreational land must never be available for military use under any conditions. I strongly oppose any effort of Washington State Parks to issue permits that would compromise the sovereignty of public spaces for any military use.\(^{672}\)

I am deeply disturbed by the proposal for the Navy to use our State Parks for training. I believe the State Parks are intended for ordinary people to enjoy the outdoors.\(^{673}\)

I am asking you to NOT issue a new Navy permit allowing military training in 29 of our State Parks. The permit(s) are in direct opposition to the role and purpose of these natural lands and adjacent waterways. Our parks exist as places for people to enjoy natures' wonders. Parks provide a restorative environment for we citizens—places to enjoy the beauty and quiet of nature and get away from the stresses of modern life. I know I speak for myself and family members and friends who've camped, hiked, picnicked in Washington parks for decades. Preserve these parks for the reason they were established—for people to enjoy and NOT to be debased by Navy military training.\(^{674}\)

Save the Olympic Peninsula (hereinafter STOP) offers the following two comments for your consideration:

1. RCW 79A.05.305, which provides as follows, prohibits you from approving the Navy's proposal:

   Declaration of policy—Lands for public park purposes. The legislature declares that it is the continuing policy of the state of Washington to set aside and manage certain lands within the state for public park purposes. To comply with public park purposes, these lands shall be acquired and managed to:

   (1) Maintain and enhance ecological, aesthetic, and recreational purposes;
   (2) Preserve and maintain mature and old-growth forests containing trees of over ninety years and other unusual ecosystems as natural forests or natural areas, which may also be used for interpretive purposes;
   (3) Protect cultural and historical resources, locations, and artifacts, which may also be used for interpretive purposes;
   (4) Provide a variety of recreational opportunities to the public, including but not limited to use of developed recreation areas, trails, and natural areas.
   (5) Preserve and maintain habitat which will protect and promote endangered, threatened, and sensitive plants, endangered, threatened, and sensitive animal species, and habitat beneficial for the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of all pollinators, including honey bees; and
   (6) Encourage public participation in the formulation and implementation of park policies and programs.

   Permitting military combat exercises is not "managing" park property to "enhance ecological, aesthetic, and recreational purposes" as required by sub-section (1) of RCW 79A.05.305, nor does it meet or further the requirements of the remaining five sub-sections of that statute.

2. The proposal would further erode our national security by contributing to the concept that military aggression is proper throughout our society and in the most hallowed locations - which concept was tragically on display on January 6, 2021, at the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C. Now is the time to start limiting that concept by telling the United States Navy that Washington State Parks are no place for its war games.

The assertion at https://parks.state.wa.us/1168/Navy-training-proposal that State Parks has the authority to permit this use is totally without merit. One of the two statutory provisions referenced
there, RCW 79A.05.030(1), says nothing in that regard. The other statutory provision referenced there, RCW 79A.05.070, actually reinforces STOP’s position that RCW 79A.05.305 prohibits you from approving the Navy’s proposal because an action of the Commission, not surprisingly, is required by RCW 79A.05.070(4) to “carry out the objectives and responsibilities of this chapter.” The overriding “objectives and responsibilities of this chapter” are enumerated in RCW 79A.05.305. Nothing in the Navy’s proposal carries out those objectives and responsibilities, chief among them being the obligation and responsibility for all of your actions to “maintain and enhance ecological, aesthetic, and recreational purposes.”

STOP is a non-profit, public benefit corporation registered in Washington State since June 16, 2015. The undersigned Ronald N. Richards is the Chair of STOP, and he has been designated as its Naval Activities lead.

STOP’s purposes include ensuring “the best use of the land, the lakes, and the rivers on, and the skies above, the earth below, and the waters adjoining, the Olympic Peninsula of the State of Washington, in order to retain the unique character of the area, protect its environmental qualities, and provide for its enjoyment by generations to come.” Through these comments we hope to educate our governmental officials as to why these Naval activities are not consistent with those purposes.

As a concerned citizen I reject the illegal proposal by the US Navy and Washington State Parks that would allow our public parklands to be used in any way for military purposes.

I support the substance contained in the letter below from Save The Olympic Peninsula (STOP) in its entirety.

I concur with the attached comments of Save The Olympic Peninsula. As a lifelong Washington resident, I and our family have always enjoyed our State Parks. As a former Clallam County Commissioner I supported numerous State Park policies, projects and proposals. As a U.S. Navy veteran, I understand the mission of the Navy. The U.S. military services currently have adequate varieties of land features upon which to conduct Naval air training needs. Especially the Army and the Navy have numerous beach and forest holdings.

Please protect the traditional mission of the great Washington State Parks system.

Please do not give permit or access to the Navy to practice their war exercises/trainings in our parks. The parks belong to the people, not the military. Allowing them to do this will ruin the whole reason why we need and go to these parks: to relax, recreate, alleviate the stress of life. Knowing that the Navy may be there hiding and lurking would completely do the opposite of relaxing and alleviating stress.

Sincerely, a life long WA resident.

The time is now to limit US military intrusion into public spaces for the incessant training the Navy, in this case, deems necessary for national security. Such training consumes vast quantities of natural resources such as fuel and results in ongoing degradation of the environment the military is charged with protecting. State parks are charted for use by the public and by law are off limits to other uses. Refuse to approve the proposed seal training in Washington State Parks.

We are totally opposed to the use of our State and National parks for military exercises. Parks are set aside for quiet enjoyment, recreation, and ecological health. The military will completely destroy all of those. The military becomes the enemy of the public trust.

This must not be allowed to proceed. We urge you to deny any and all permits for the military to use our parks for war games and other destructive behavior. The military exists to protect, not to violate, the public.

Hello-
I’m writing to please oppose military training in Blake Island, Cama Beach, Camano Island, Cape Disappointment, Deception Pass, Dosewallips, Fort Casey, Fort Columbia, Fort Ebey, Fort Flagler, Fort Townsend, Fort Worden, Grayland Beach, Hope Island, Illahee, Joseph Whidbey, Leadbetter Point, Manchester, Mystery Bay, Pacific Pines, Scenic Beach, Sequim Bay, Shine Tidelands, Skagit Island Marine, South Whidbey, Triton Cove, Twin Harbors, and Westport Light state parks. I visit several of these parks several times a year and feel a military presence there will cause too much disturbance.

I am opposed to the navy conducting training in state parks. This training is potentially dangerous for both trainees and civilians simply enjoying our parks. In North Carolina an off duty Sheriff Deputy was accosted by two trainees brandishing mock weapons. He drew his service weapon and shot both of them. One died, and the other was seriously injured. Later, the Navy filed suit against the county for damages and was awarded $750,000. Our county can’t afford this kind of liability. As we are all aware, in today’s world civilians are often carrying personal defense weapons. And I can personally verify that many campers routinely have weapons in their campers, trailers and tents. No one would be surprised if a family startled and frightened in the middle of the night by unidentified camo wearing persons with a blackened faces fired in what they thought was self defense. Is this a risk we want to take just to provide hide and seek training for the Navy? Or in another scenario, who wants their children frightened by scary people hiding in the bushes spying on them. Hide and seek games are for our kids, not for adults with what look like monster faces and weapons.

The purpose of our state park system is not to provide training grounds for Navy covert surveillance. We citizens of Washington pay for the upkeep and maintenance of our parks with our taxes and donations, and we also pay for our Discover Passes to use them. The Navy pays nothing for upkeep and maintenance and I have not heard that they will be buying discover passes for their personnel using the parks. How is that fair? We already pay for their training ranges with our taxes. They need to use them. Please deny this egregious and outrageous attempt to ruin our state parks.

I absolutely oppose utilizing our state parks for federal or any military training. The state parks are for recreational use and enjoyment for the public, NOT for military training. We have military reservations in this state and country set aside for military training. Military training should be done on land set aside for the military’s use, not in our Washington state parks. Do not spoil our beautiful parks that are badly needed for the beauty, the peace, the tranquility and for much needed recreational and spiritual purposes. NO Navy or any military use in our State Parks, NO.

Thank you for helping clarify the ways to submit comments. If I have it right, a comment submitted either directly to the commission or the SEPA division of parks will be reviewed by both the park commissioners and the SEPA people.

Please let me know if I’m on the right track. Thank you for your patience.

Attached is a true story demonstrating why it is so important our parks continue to be preserved and protected from "operations" by the military or by anyone else. I think you may enjoy it.

THE OCTOPUS! "Hurry! Come on down right now! Abbey's voice on the phone was excited and urgent. "There's an octopus stranded on the sand and it's really big! If you come right now you may get a chance to see it!" "I'm on my way!" Driving to the park I felt so happy going to meet our dear friends, Abbey, Rob, and their two children Robin and Lena, who were visiting from Spokane. We miss them terribly since they moved away several years ago for a better job. Now we see them briefly each summer and relish every moment together. Our state park includes some miles of beach that front on Puget Sound where the largest octopus in the world live. I felt excited at the prospect of seeing one. Octopi have always held great fascination for me, I don't know why -- perhaps because their forms are
so very different from my own. Yet I feel a kinship I can’t explain, and perceive an intelligence with which I long to communicate. I feel an awe and reverence in their presence at aquariums, but I had never had the opportunity to observe one for more than a few moments in the wild. A group of humans were gathered in a circle on the sand at low tide. I could see our four friends among the small crowd. As I got closer I saw the octopus in the center of the crowd. The creature was huddled up, tentacles wrapped and laced about its head which was approximately as big as an adult human’s head. Had its tentacles been spread out, they might have measured four feet, tip to tip. Abbey and Rob’s children danced up to me. Calling and pointing excitedly while they pulled me closer by the hand, they recounted in detail their discovery. Rob had first seen the octopus walking across the sand at low tide. He assumed it was trying to get back in the water, but, unfortunately, it was headed in the wrong direction! Now, it was stranded about 15 - 20 feet from the water, resting in the wet sand.

About 12 people, adults and children, were gathered around at a respectful distance of several feet, observing and discussing their observations -- adults occasionally calling children back when they approached too closely for what was assumed to be octopus comfort. Several youngsters were busy making forays to the water with plastic containers and returning to pour cool water over the octopus’ head. It was a sunny day, and we assumed the sea creature needed to stay wet until the tide, now at its lowest ebb, returned. People had begun talking about the octopus in the usual way, referring to the creature as “he.” I inquired if anyone knew how to distinguish octopus gender, or even if there are separate genders in the species? No one seemed to know, so I began to refer to the octopus as “she.” Evidently someone had named the octopus Fredrick, but after hearing me refer to it as “she,” one of the mothers began calling the octopus Fredrica. From then on, that was her name. All of us were glued to the scene -- an amazing creature before us! Was she stranded by accident? Was she ill or dying? How would this end? Should we alert the rangers? No one had a working cell phone, and no one wanted to leave. Meanwhile, Fredrica was going through incredible changes. Her tentacles writhed about her head like a group of snakes! Then, she lied still for a while, tolerating the dumping of water on her head. A teenager girl carefully dug a little trench around Fredrica, which functioned like a moat. Very occasionally, Fredrica would open her eyes. Mostly, her eyes were closed, but once in a while little slits would appear, and sometimes open even wider to a fully round shape -- Fredrica checked us out! Then, bingo!, they would snap shut again. I didn’t blame her. I tried to imagine what she saw when she opened her eyes. A tight circle of babbling giants with no escape in sight! Several times during those few hours, Fredrica passed through dramatic kaleidoscopes of color changes that astonished us. Most of the time her color was pale and whitish. Then, slowly, she would transform into a marbled design -- dramatic dark red marbling over a white background! Smoothly, that color pattern flowed into a gorgeous solid orange, changing almost imperceptibly into bright fire engine red! Not only were we all glued to the spot, our eyes were glued to Fredrica! No one had an explanation for the phenomenon we were observing. Later, I was informed that octopi use color changes for camouflage when they are frightened. Makes sense -- she must have felt terrified. The ebb tide eventually came to an end, and water began to creep up the wet beach toward Fredrica in small wave-like surges. Collectively we breathed a sigh of relief -- for her sake. All of us longed for that return with deep passion. Children dug a trench from Fredrica to the water to speed up its return. When the little waves finally touched her, Fredrica astonished us once again! Suddenly, two large openings appeared on either side of her head below her eyes. It seemed that air was being sucked into one hole and blown out the other! Could this be? But no! Water came spraying out the other! What was happening? We were all agog! Now, the sea began its return in earnest. Parents prevented children from cutting off Fredrica’s route back to the sound, as we all waited, breathless, hoping for the moment she would swim away. Was she okay? Was she ill? Would she swim? Would she die? She did not move, except to occasionally suck in water through one hole and gush it out through the other. When the water had risen to my calves, most people had left except for our little family group -
- my partner and I, and our dear friends from Spokane. We debated whether or not to leave in order to alert the ranger. Abbey's cell phone batteries had been used up taking pictures of Fredrica. We waited. When the water became too deep and cold, Abbey took the children up to the dry sand. All of a sudden, Fredrica stretched out all eight of her arms in one direction, pointed her head out to sea, and shot away like a catapult toward the sound, disappearing under a bed of kelp! Ecstatically, we shouted the good news -- clapping, hooting, jumping up and down, hugging each other! Fredrica was fine! Fredrica was full of life! Fredrica was awesome! Fredrica was liberated! Fredrica had gone home! Later, reflecting together about our wonderful experience, we all felt so grateful. To Rob for spotting her in the first place; to Abbey for phoning us; to all of us for our loving actions during those hours -- a group of strangers collectively and cooperatively caring for an octopus during her dangerous and inadvertent sojourn on the sand. To Fredrica, for herself -- a brilliant miracle of life visiting us so briefly, yet changing us all forever in some inexplicable way. To the Creator for this amazing planet we are sharing with our family of life in its myriad forms!

Whereas I recognize the need for the Navy to be able to train in a variety of settings, the function of the State Parks is for the citizens of this state to get away from their everyday cares and take refuge in places of beauty and calm. If there were no other choices, it might be appropriate to use the parks in this way, but there are plenty of other places for them to train, land already owned by the Navy or otherwise not in use for recreation. When you add to this concern the possibility that such training might disregard protection of sensitive ecosystems in the impulse toward verisimilitude, it seems to me there are plenty of reasons to deny this request and very few if any to recommend it. I sincerely urge you to deny the Navy's request to use park lands for military exercises and, furthermore, to take action to make such denials a firm policy of your commission.

I applaud the Staff's determination that the proposed Navy action does not have a probable significant adverse impact on the environment. As a Washington State resident, a frequent user of Washington State Parks and a neighbor to one of the parks under consideration, I offer my 100% support for allowing the Navy to use the parks for training. The Navy trainees have used the park I live near for years and have caused no problems for me or my family. I see no reason why the proposed future training will be of any concern to the public or to park management. I fully support allowing the Navy to use my State Parks for training. Please approve the Navy's request so they can restart their training as soon as possible.

Two of our grandchildren have attended routine outdoor classes in South Whidbey State Park. I cannot speak to the circumstances that this important training might have on other state parks but I can for South Whidbey State Park as my wife and I have walked the trails of this part on our own and with the kids and their friends enrolled in these outdoor classes. While it may seem inconsistent to have concerns about the safety of military personnel using these trails while knowing our grandkids are using the area to learn about the flora and fauna of the area, I would have to say that this concern is that the parents are aware of the danger while military personnel are following orders to be there. Not only does this park have steep, narrow trails that run through rare old growth trees on Whidbey Island but some of the trails have extreme drop offs only inches from the trail edges. Whether a danger to the military personnel focused on their training objectives or to individuals walking the trails after this training, the environment at this particular park appears fragile and something to preserve by having training done in areas that are less fragile. Due to erosion, at least one of the steeper trails there has been closed to the public, limiting access to the beach below. Again, I cannot speak to the specifics of other state parks but this one exists in an area that needs everyone using it to be careful and that would potentially interfere with training or present a danger to our troops.
As 25 year residents of Whidbey Island, Island County, WA, we recommend denying a permit to allow the US Navy access to 29 state parks for military training. Such an activity is inconsistent with the Parks’ mission and with the public’s use and enjoyment of parks. Please step up and do the right thing by denying the US Navy this permit.666

We in the pacific northwest still have a vibrant ecology and an appreciation for natural beauty and all creatures and landscapes easily disrupted by military training. My husband and I are adamantly opposed to any kind of military training in Washington State Parks. We in the northwest still have a vibrant ecology and an appreciation for natural beauty and its people, creatures and landscapes easily disrupted by military training. This is a quiet and natural environment, and we want it to remain so. Please do not allow training in or on the Olympic Peninsula or any other state park. This land is our land. Paid for by the people to use as recreation, not military training.669

My comments are in regards to the Navy Training Proposal. As a resident who lives on Whidbey Island, I support the military, their families. I love the cultural diversity and boon this brings to the local economy. However, I do NOT support any military exercises within public spaces.

Whidbey Island already has land and water set aside for the Navy to use and train within. For example, Lake Hancock northwest of Greenbank, WA is off-limits to civilians because it is dedicated to training. Therefore, it is NOT necessary for the Navy to conduct exercises within Washington State or county parks.

Honestly, I feel military and law enforcement training should NEVER take place on publicly accessible lands. The training should not be in view of the public. Likewise, the public should not be barred from using lands set aside for preservation and recreation for all.

Military and law enforcement activity, including training, encourages militia-minded fools to dress up and play mercenary too. Consider the January 6th attack on the US Capitol. This riot was a danger, a serious threat to elected leaders, civilians, the military, and law enforcement!

Do NOT think for a moment that this cannot happen on Whidbey. The Seattle Times covered a few of the right-wing activities that happened before and after November’s presidential election: https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/far-right-group-claim-at-whidbey-island-grange-stoking-angry-debate-and-exposing-political-divides/. As a local resident, I find this racist activity unacceptable. Considering there are known links between these extremists with both the military and law enforcement already, I am extremely wary of the proposed training in public parks.

The last thing we need right now is a bunch of camo wearing creeps hiding out and playing soldier in the woods or on the beaches. The Navy might be using simulated weapons, but the self-appointed militia members are armed. If peaceful demonstrators are added to the mix, then it is not going to end well.

In conclusion, I ask that the Washington State Parks deny the Navy’s request because a) there is already space set aside for their training, b) training on public lands will encourage more violent activity by socially disenfranchised people, and c) these lands are for the preservation and recreation of all, not the privileged few.690
In reading through the Navy's proposal for using Washington State Parks for training purposes, it seems careful consideration has been given to the logistics and oversight of these maneuvers. I am wondering why there is such an increase in the number of State Parks included in this proposal. This number of Parks has been tripled! Does this mean there will be more maneuvers scheduled with more participants than in the previous 5 years? This being such a sensitive period of time of isolation and limited social contact, increased military activity in State Parks does not sound good to me. It does seem to be in conflict with the Vision and the Mission of the State Parks System; precious land set aside for public enjoyment and healthy contact with our ever shrinking natural environment.

At one point I also read that these trainings would not include Unmanned Aircraft. However, on a further page, Appendix 3, it stated that "support personnel would maintain line of sight at all times with Unmanned Aircraft Systems. Personnel would enact immediate recovery in the event of a platform failure". Another statement, personnel would "maintain positive control of the UAS before during and after training". I strongly support the proposed condition set forth by WSA that unmanned aircraft not be allowed.

I work for the City of Seattle Parks Dept and see people bringing drones in for entertainment. This upsets the ducks and other waterfowl which find refuge in the ponds at Golden Gardens adjacent to Puget Sound. They leave immediately because of the disturbance.

My wife and I are opposed to allowing the Navy to conduct training exercises at Deception Pass State Park. This is the most visited park in the system, already impacted by heavy Highway 20 traffic and Navy jet noise. To add mock assaults would be to disrupt what serenity the park has and risk damage to its resources. One need only view the beach and tree damage from the January 13 windstorm to see that the park’s steep slopes are subject to erosion and decay.

A few years ago, we camped at Silver Strand State Park near San Diego, located next to the primary SEAL base on the West Coast. While it was somewhat amusing to have a beach landing exercise take place near us, the automatic weapons fire did not mesh well with a typical parks experience. If the Navy MUST conduct this kind of exercise for national defense, I’d suggest unpopulated parts of the state land base. For example, Burrows Island near Anacortes (we look at it from our house) is more uninhabited and probably provides more challenging training for landings and cliff climbs. I’m not proposing Burrows, but only pointing out that other properties make more sense than popular Deception Pass. Skagit County’s Sharpe Park is also more lightly used. Or, James or Jones Islands, accessible only by boat.

The Navy’s use of Washington State Parks does not align with the mission, vision and core values stated by the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission. Instead, the Navy’s use of our state parks is an exploitation of our parks and makes them a fearful place to go. I cannot imagine thinking of the states parks as a cherished destination knowing that the military is lurking about in the bushes. I find that down right creepy, and it would make me not want to go to the parks where it might be occurring.
This potential decision seems to be thought of as an economic opportunity for the state park system, rather than adhering to why Washington has state parks and why Washington residents care about them so much. Please do not allow the Navy to use our state parks to desecrate our cherished natural destinations.

I love my state parks. That being the main reason I’ve done volunteer work at CISP and Cama Beach SP over the past 17 years. Frequently, after finishing the job given to me by parks staff, I walk the beach or trails with litter bag, enjoying the serenity and peace and quiet. This would no longer be possible with the military infiltrating my parks, sneaking around. I totally and extremely object to being surveilled without my knowledge or permission. Just thinking about it gives me the creeps. Please deny the navy’s requested right of entry permit, and leave my parks to unwind, rest, and enjoy nature.

Just say NO. Whidbey Island is too precious for military escapades. Our little children will be in GRAVE danger. PLEASE FORBID THIS. it is a ridiculous sign of something that should NEVER happen.

As a property owner of land that lies next to a Washington State Park, I am opposed for the use Washington State Parks for such Military training, or for any Military training. The use of Public accessible Lands for Military training, sets a very bad precedent, and could cause bad or nerves feelings, to property owners and a thought that the people are losing control over “their Military.” After all, it is the peoples Military, NOT the Government’s Military.

So, tell the NAVY to go find lands that are NOT used by the public, or that is managed by BLM and is far removed from the General Public, away from all Public lands and Washington State Parks. If you ask them, you can probably use Canadian Government lands and islands in the Sound, after all, China forces have been observed on Canadian Islands in the Puget Sound.

As a property next to a State Park, and having been in the Military, an owner of Arms who is often armed and carrying, I might mistake a Military exercise next to my property or when boating as possibly hostile or dangerous to me and/or my family. Considering the times we are living in, with a new senile President, and since our relationship with the likes of China for example is not the greatest and is unknown, an invasion from bad actors could well begin on public lands. The public however, and you should know, is always watching for that foreign encroachment, especially those US citizens boating in Washington State waters.

An exercise even by or for US Military Training may be a very risky venture, when done on public land and especially when it is done on Recognized State Park Land in Public State waters. A conflict between the public, and the Military would not be very good PR for the Parks Committee. Please use your common sense and vote against this request. The potential possible fallout for your approval is not worth it to you.

The U.S. Navy should not be allowed to use Deception Pass State Park as a training area. This Park is one of Washington’s most popular. Having intruding military training exercises in the Park would go against the mission of what the Park should be used for. We already have noisy Growler airplanes disturbing the area. We don’t need addition military intrusion.

STOP the Navy Warfare drills!!! NOW. What are you thinking??? Navy operations training in washington.......I Live on Whidbey near Ft. Ebey State Park—ABSOLUTELY OPPOSED!!! What kind of country is this?!!?!!?
Attached is a letter signed by 85 persons from throughout WA State, all in opposition to permitting the Navy’s use of WA State parks.

We submit this for the SEPA. Please see that the Parks’ Commissioners receive this communication, as well, and for any other documents to which need responding.

Please communicate with everyone on this list further communications from your office on this matter, including the Parks’ Commission decision.

The US Navy has applied for a Right of Entry (ROE) permit(s) in order to conduct military training at 29 Washington State parks.

The proposal would allow Navy SEAL training at state parks that will include sea to land disembarkation, crossing over beaches, scaling bluffs and simulating warfare through park lands. Use of the park lands could be 24/7.

In addition to several trainees at each park, numerous trainers and equipment will be part of the exercises.

Regardless of the mitigations the Parks Department drafted, which are beside the point and, further, the adherence to which could not be overseen by Parks’ staff, we oppose ROEs for any of our State Parks.

Washington State Parks’ mission is to care for and connect park users with this state’s most treasured lands, waters and historic places, providing safe, enjoyable and memorable experiences. The public does not visit parks to meet up with, be confronted by, or be directed to move from areas by other users. The parks are publicly owned and funded. Allowance of military activities could drive the public from the parks and, consequently, cost tourism and financial support depended upon by Washington State Parks and the communities where these parks are located.

The Navy is already damaging people’s enjoyment at Washington State Parks with Growler exercises. Your service is a recipient of these complaints.

We, the undersigned, oppose Parks contracting, in any form, with this or any other branch of the military for training purposes and encourage you to encourage the Navy to conduct its exercises at their multiple bases across the US.

Perhaps fifteen, maybe twenty years ago I was walking along the beach with friends on Whidbey Island, and unexpectedly came upon the boundaries of the Whidbey Island Naval Air Station. I have never forgotten the (admittedly irrational) fear/adrenaline rush that I experienced when I saw the danger signs warning the public away from the possibility of training exercises nearby. Now every time I go to Whidbey I think of that experience.

I would be very sad to have a similar association with our beloved Washington State Parks. During the many years that the Navy has had a presence in Washington State, it appears that a most effective job has been accomplished training people on Navy land; there seems to be plenty of Navy waterfront property and land with varied topography on which to conduct naval trainings. It seems redundant to use our State Parks for a purpose which is already being well-served.

Thank you for all the work you do on our behalf. I respectfully request that as stewards of our State Parks you decline the Navy’s request to use them for military trainings.

Please, please protect our parks for their intended mission, which includes the enjoyment of the people.

Military training at our parks is very concerning and unorthodox.

Do not allow these activities!

It will have an extremely significant impact on the population that flocks to our state Parks. They, as well as our national parks are treasured and beloved.

We humans are stewards, not consumers of the land.

Please do not allow this to occur and protect our ecosystems.
Continue to hold these places for safe activities that enrich lives and protect the uniquely quiet and natural environment, now and for generations to come.

State Parks

We urge you to deny this proposed activity, and we thank you for the ability to comment. Our comments are as follows:

• Comments specific to the SEPA: In section 11, the description of the proposed trainings is not adequate, and more specific information is needed. For example, “small surface support vessels” and “small boats” will be used. Exactly what kind of vessels and boats will be used, and how large are they? Also in section 11, the use of “simulated munitions” is used. What is this? In section 12, the locations of the trainings is not adequate. Specific locations and maps should show the exact locations within the 29 individual parks where the proposed exercises will occur. The list of noxious weeds and invasive species is inadequate. The SEPA does not adequately explain how the public will be informed about a military training exercise. Will there be signs, or some kind of warning? What kind of communication will be offered to the public who are camping and/or visiting a park when this occurs? The SEPA is vague about exact steps that will be taken if the public enters an active training area. Conducting military training activities is inconsistent with the mission, vision, and core values of the State Park System. Most specifically, the proposed training is not consistent with the stated core value of outdoor recreation and public enjoyment that welcomes all our citizens to their public parks. Trainees carrying realistic looking fake weapons will clearly conflict with parks rules – where weapons are not allowed. The Navy’s proposal states that military exercises will occur on trails, tidelands, beaches, and in the water. The proposal also states that the Navy will use Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), as well as vehicles, boats, and submersibles. These activities will interfere with the activities that the public enjoys. These are sensitive areas that need protection. Tidelands and beaches are habitat for a wide variety of life – please protect these areas for the enjoyment of the public. I am concerned that there will be a great need for oversight and enforcement. What provisions has State Parks made, or will it make, for such oversight and enforcement? What will be the cost of this oversight and enforcement, and what will be the funding source? Finally, why does this training need to take place in our busy state parks, when in the past, it apparently took place elsewhere? Does this convenience to the Navy outweigh protecting the parks and the experience of the public? Let this important training take place on lands and shorelines not dedicated to the important and high purpose of public parks. Thank you for considering our comments.

We are frequent visitors to many of the state parks on Island County and the Peninsula. Fort Casey, Dec Pass, Fort Ebey, Miller State Park, Fort Worden are our favorites. These state parks were established for recreation for families and visitors to relax and enjoy history, nature, hiking. Also, these parks provide habitat for many species of wildlife, some which are declining in population due to loss of habitat in surrounding areas, climate change or other factors. State Parks should never be used for military exercises of any kind. We need to guard the safety of visitors and the fragile habitats for wildlife. People come from all around the world to camp at our parks (pre-pandemic). People who are isolated in urban areas due to the pandemic travel many miles to visit our parks to relax and find some peace and tranquility. The liability issues for accidents involving covert military exercises and state park visitors are glaringly obvious. But also, if visitors know they are unwillingly being used as targets or participants for military exercises, that spoils the whole experience. Maybe the Navy can use more of the hundreds of acres it already owns for these exercises with volunteers instead of using state park properties and visitors. Keep our state parks safe, natural, and a haven for endangered wildlife, trees and plants.

Please prevent the Navy from using our state parks. Our parks have delicate environmental balances. They are meant for the public to enjoy nature at its best.
After reading this proposal, I could only imagine the ridiculous and traumatic experience of a young child or elder or even a dog on the beach being confronted by uniformed, geared and armed military troops (even if arms were not live). It sounds entirely ludicrous and verging on insanely complete opposition to the purpose of a "park."

It strikes me as one of the most terrifying and oppressive possible choices that our State Park system could make at this time when public use of parks is at an all-time high and so necessary in this time of pandemic.

Outdoors is the only currently safer area for people to Washington State residents to move and meet and connect with our environment.

Parks open space are for ALL people and especially WA State residents not for contracted federal military exercises.

And if these people (children, elders, animals, families, etc) are going to be denied access to the parks because the federal military are using them, they should not have to pay taxes to support them or have them called or managed as "State Parks."

They would be military bases that are funded federal.

Why are the Navy not using their own vast lands and resources for training?

Whatever the Navy is proposing to pay could not possibly be worth it.

We must decline this proposal immediately and raise any needed funds to support State Parks among WA State residents.

Thank you for your attention and care for our precious Washington State Park lands, visitors and residents.

I want to inform you that it is not at all easy to find the ONLINE COMMENT FORM
At the website: Parks.state.wa.us. I searched for a long Time.
You say that I must use the form (or I can email if I have an attachment, which I do not.)
I live on Whidbey Island (Zip 98260)
I AM very upset that Washington State Parks are considering allowing the NAVY SPECIAL OPERATIONS (SEALS) to Train in up to 28 State parks as many times as they want.
They are using land that belongs to state citizens; being that they are Governmental Group, they do not automatically qualify as welcome to use the parks for whatever they see fit. No citizen can actually use the parks "willy-nilly" for whatever they want. In fact, We citizens cannot actually camp in South Whidbey State Park currently for “safety reasons”

So, I think that having SEALS crawling around in the park at various hours, is also NOT safe either for them or more importantly for the citizens that wish to enjoy the solitude and to obtain healthy respite.

Thank you for considering this COMMENT; it has arrived to you before the January 22nd cut off date.

I write in opposition to "Naval Special Operations Training in Western Washington State" as outlined in the MDNS signed by Jessica Logan, EPM, on December 21, 2000.
My threshold question about this threshold determination is:
WHY is the Commission agreeing with this at all?
I don’t understand why we would agree to this, especially when the Federal government owns so much of its own land, including extensive shorelines, which could be used and damaged instead. It seems to be all cost and no benefit. Is Washington State being paid for this? Is there any quid pro quo? If not, why do it?
I am the Managing Partner of one of the longest established law firms on Whidbey Island, and live immediately next door to Ft. Ebey, where we basically raised our kids playing in the woods. As an attorney I am extremely concerned about the potential negative consequences of this program.
These range from destruction of our very fragile bluffs and shoreline flora and fauna, to the potential mental health damage it will do. Imagine when some poor soul’s "escape from Covid walk-in-the-woods" turns into a nightmare after they stumble into a violent group of scary looking soldiers emerging from the deeps wielding giant weapons.

Not just any soldiers. SEALS, the ones who killed Bin Laden, who might be shot themselves by some Second Amendment right wing nut trying to rescue us from invasion. (Just knowing that might possibly happen is enough to drive people around the bend.) Kinda medically contraindicated for the public right now, doncha’ think? Personally, even though this might look cool on TV, I prefer peace and quiet. I also enjoy undisturbed nature, you know, the kind the Parks are supposed to protect? This would ruin all of that; the very reasons parks exist in the first place would be usurped by war games.

But back to the initial question that must be asked:

Why are we agreeing to this invasive, potentially dangerous and destructive training at all? Have we no choice? Is “State’s Rights” just a slogan? Is there a law or contract or something that requires us to allow this if there is a MDNS on file?

Then what is it for Washington State, other than terrified citizens looking for peace and quiet in the woods and finding terror instead?

What is the quid pro quo? If there is none, then WHY AGREE TO THE TRAINING AT ALL?

For example, Assume your neighbor asked to use your yard for a giant paintball party for several dozen of his friends and promised to “avoid” ruining your property, would you conduct an impact statement or would you just say no?

And what if he will only agree to tell his buddies to “avoid” trashing your place, rather than agree that he “will not” or “shall not” destroy your place (which is the language lawyers and statutes actually use; avoid is a meaningless legal term, unless you are discussing “Last Chance Doctrine” in Torts). And what if he did not agree that he will reimburse you for any damages his friends cause? Instead he says, “If we ruin your place you would be free to hire and pay for a lawyer and sue me.”

Would you say, “SURE! G’HEAD!!” ???

No. You would say, “Go Pound Sand”. Or you MIGHT say, “Pay me $10K and I will agree.”

But would you conduct an environmental impact review and if it said it was ok would you just agree to said paintball party for no good reason whatsoever? Of course not!

Then why should Washington state?

It is All Cost, No Benefit Whatsoever.

**IMPACTS**

**EXTENT OF NEGATIVE IMPACTS**

Duration of Impact

The MDNS states: “36 times per year and for a maximum of 72 hours per training event.” In 28 parks. 36 possible training sessions x 3 days per session x 28 parks = 3024 DAYS OF POTENTIAL DAMAGE PER YEAR

This is a lot of time to “avoid” any possible problems.

Fragile Eco Systems

There is no way to predict, determine, monitor or inspect damage that might be done. Is the state going to assign scuba divers to inspect the sea bed before and after it is stomped all over by landing craft and heavy boots, Normandy style? No.

Is the State going to send out crews to inspect and repair the fragile vegetation and erosion plagued bluffs? No. WHO would pay for it?

**TYPES OF NEGATIVE IMPACTS**

Danger
The idea that people in camouflage are storming beaches at night with realistic looking guns scares the crap out of me. In this neighborhood that kind of behavior will get you shot. And, Trust me, to quote a wise man, "someone is going to get hurt, someone is going to get shot, someone is going to get killed". Which happened on a similar exercise where a SEAL was shot to death by local deputies who were told by concerned citizens that men with guns were sneaking around -- despite the military promising to notify local Law Enforcement about the exercise in advance. They apparently "forgot" and one of their own is dead as a result. Not good. Oh, and btw, the county had to pay out a huge settlement. That alone, is reason enough to stop this from happening on State Parks’ land. As I said, All Cost, No Benefit.

The Psychological Factor
This is perhaps the most significant problem. Plants grow back; mental health does not. This would potentially cause major psychological damage to local residents and tourists seeking an escape from this crazy world.

Look at the photos. My family has walked the trails of Ft. Ebey State Park for decades. My daughter dreams of getting married at one of our many favorite out of the way places inside the park. I have run every square inch of the park for a total of thousands of miles. I know it well. We know lots of hidden spots that are off the beaten track (exactly where the SEALS say they will be). “Secret Fort”, “Grandfather Tree”, “Hidden Valley”, these are all names the kids gave to special places when they were little. Our son ran the trails like me and our daughter roamed around taking photos. Now he is a patent lawyer and she makes TV shows. The fact that the lawyer was also a NCAA athlete speaks volumes. They grew up in this park. The physical and mental health benefits of being able to get away from the chaos and find peace and quiet nature is priceless.

Now, instead of finding solitude we find this:

DUTY OF CARE STANDARD
Simply put, there is NONE. Nothing is clearly prohibited. All they have to do is avoid wreaking havoc. That’s like a law that you have to avoid murdering people if you possibly can.

“Avoid”
“Avoid” is not “a thing” legally speaking. At least that is what they taught us at Stanford Law School. It is NOT a prohibition; it is a suggestion, and means absolutely nothing.

Monitoring and Enforcement
The only outside monitoring going on is being conducted by the military as they observe and monitor civilians. And tell them to leave the area if people get too close when they are on their “walks in the woods”, such as they are.

They also need to “monitor” the fragile flora and fauna. So?? I can “monitor” an old lady getting mugged, but that won’t do her much good, will it?

Same with Mother Nature.

Sanctions
There are NONE. That is unbelievable. If you drive your car over the speed limit you can be sanctioned, which helps prevent people from speeding. But if you destroy fragile ecosystems, terrorize small children, and destroy the peace and quiet and mental health of people like me, who love the parks and practically live in one? Nara. Nothing. Other than what some Admiral reportedly said: “You are always free hire a lawyer and sue us under the Federal Torts Claim Act.”
Really? Are they going to pay for the legal fees for us? Will they roll over on a Summary Judgment Motion and provide Restitution to correct the damage and destruction caused by these exercises?

Hell no. Have you ever MET an Assistant US Attorney? I have. Have you ever tried a case in federal court against one? I have. They do NOT roll over. Ever.

ALTERNATIVES
The Federal government owns tons of land in this state including extensive coastal areas. Use that!

TIMING
One last point: Timing of the notice for public comment is suspect. The tiny little Notice card was sent out just a few short days before Christmas during a huge USPS slow down. Initially, comments were due just a few days after NYE. Do the math. It stinks to high heaven to all but the most trusting and naive.

This project must not go forward.
I have stated my case. Please consider my input and make the right choice. Cancel the whole thing. If not, I’ll see you all in court.

There can be no plausible or excepted reason for this Navy proposal to use our State Parks for military training. On Whidbey Island the Navy owns countless acres of interior and shoreline. They already have a wilderness area designated for training south east of Oak Harbor. The stress the Navy has put on outlying islands plus the Olympic National Park with incessant fly overs has all but ruined any positive experience in the northwest. Deception Pass Park is already inundated with tourists to the point those of us who live here find no joy trying to savor what is in our own back yard. So, no, I do not wish to see further incursions and degradation of our natural resources.

Hello, while I support the military and the vital role it plays in our nation’s defense, I do not feel military activities are congruent with the purposes of state parks. I would like to express my position that military training activities should not be allowed on state parks. This would impact my family, children, and sense of safety. Training accidents can happen. Please consider the families.

I am writing to vehemently oppose the use of our State Parks by the military for covert surveillance training and ask you to oppose the Right of Entry permit the Navy is seeking. With Covid19 running rampant in our communities, some of the most scared and peaceful places we are able to enjoy safely are our State Parks. The idea that the military needs to conduct covert surveillance on unsuspecting citizens in our State Parks is absolutely outrageous. So much for enjoying the parks beauty, peacefulness and solace.

Nature is one of the most healing environments humans have. To turn these scared spaces over the military to conduct training of any kind is a violation of our commitment to provide safe, welcoming and enriching spaces for all citizens. Please oppose this request and leave the State Parks for all to enjoy, without being used in any covert way.

Please see attached for Audubon Washington’s comments on the U.S. Navy’s proposal for special operations training in state parks.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the SEPA threshold determination for The United States Naval Special Warfare Command (NSWC) proposal for special operations training in 28 Western Washington state parks. Audubon Washington works with 25 local chapters to deliver on-the-ground conservation across the state. In addition, our 49,000 members spread across every legislative district help advance balanced, effective conservation policies. We partner with policy makers, government agencies, tribes, and other conservation groups to drive forward-thinking conservation solutions that benefit birds and communities. Washington’s state parks are treasured places that provide world-class recreational opportunities, support rich biodiversity, and are places of respite and renewal. Indeed, the mission of Washington State Parks to “…connect all Washingtonians
to their diverse natural and cultural heritage and provide memorable recreational and educational experiences that enhance their lives” speaks to the powerful role that parks play in our lives. While we disagree that the NSWC’s proposed activities are compatible with the mission, vision and core values of Washington state parks, our comments today are focused on the coastal bird life of Washington state, and specific recommendations to minimize and avoid impacts to these birds and their food and habitat resources. Birds at Risk Puget Sound and the outer coastal beaches and estuaries of Washington State are areas of critical importance for birds within the Pacific Flyway (Figure 1). Seabirds, shorebirds, waterfowl, and other marine species rely on the rich food resources that thrive in our marine environment, particularly during the overwintering and migratory stop-over periods. Along Washington’s outer coast and Strait of Juan de Fuca (i.e., Region 3), productive waters and remote rocky islands support large colonies of breeding seabirds such as Rhinoceros Auklets, state endangered Tufted Puffins, and large concentrations of migrating Sooty Shearwaters and other pelagic species. Coastal estuaries and beaches in and around Grays Harbor and Willapa Bay are renowned for the spectacular concentrations of shorebirds that visit during spring migration. Aside from the significant numbers of Dunlin and Western Sandpipers that rest and winter in the area, these estuaries serve as the primary stopover habitat for migrating populations of the Pacific Red Knot on their journey from Mexico to Alaska and beyond (Buchanan et al. 2011). The state and federally-listed Western Snowy Plover breeds at just three locales in and around Willapa Bay, including two state parks (Stinson 2016). Marbled Murrelet, also a state and federally-listed species, forages in nearshore marine waters throughout Washington State (Desimone 2016). Puget Sound (i.e., Region 1 and 2) supports a critical link in the annual life cycle of many marine and coastal bird species, supporting over 70 species of shorebirds, waterfowl, secretive marsh birds, and other marine bird species (Buchanan 2006). Waterfowl species diversity is exceptionally high during winter months, when 38 species of waterfowl congregate in the area (Gaydos and Pearson 2011). Numerous community science projects monitor marine birds in Puget Sound (e.g., Seattle Audubon Puget Sound Seabird Survey, Pigeon Guillemot Network), reflecting the public’s connection to and stewardship of birds. Community Values at Risk Birds provide ecological, cultural, and economic benefits to Washington residents and communities. Access to birds – whether for observation, hunting, photography, or simple enjoyment, brings economic and cultural benefits to coastal communities. Many Northwest Tribes rely on these birds for ceremonial and subsistence living purposes, and birds provide a connection to their traditional ecological knowledge systems and cultures. Numerous festivals occur throughout the region in celebration of birds, bringing additional tourist dollars and opportunities for new audiences to connect with nature. Birds also provide ecosystem services to river delta estuaries via dispersal of seeds and invertebrates, and as herbivores and predators (Green and Elmberg 2014). Biological Resource Protection Recommendations The proposed activities have the potential to disturb birds during sensitive times in their annual cycle (e.g., spring and fall migration), disturb or degrade nesting, foraging and roosting habitat, disturb or degrade food sources (e.g., forage fish spawning habitat), and may serve as a conduit for the transfer of invasive aquatic and marine riparian species. We appreciate that activity-specific protection measures for sensitive species and habitats have been developed, and agree that local natural resource managers should be consulted on avoidance measures for sensitive resource areas, timing issues and compliance with local management objectives. However, despite increased public demand for and use of our state parks, administration and stewardship support for our state parks is notoriously underfunded. We are very concerned about the ability of managers to absorb and fully execute the responsibility of stewarding natural resource and cultural values under this plan. A strong mitigation and avoidance plan will not suffice if there is no institutional capacity to implement it. Should the proposal proceed, the applicants should establish a funding mechanism to support the associated management burden that will fall on Washington State Parks. According to the Washington State Parks Mitigated
Determination of Non-significance, State Parks will condition any future permits with the following mitigation measures listed below to avoid, minimize, or mitigate for any potential significant adverse impacts to Plants, Animals, Cultural and Historic Resources, Recreation. Recommended changes to this language for plants and animals are indicated in italics.

**B.4. Plants**
- The Navy will follow all conditions and Best Management Practices (BMPs) described in the “2019 Final Environmental Assessment for Naval Special Operations Training in Western Washington” to avoid, minimize or otherwise mitigate impacts to plants.
- During training activities, Navy staff will monitor for the presence of listed state and federal species and trainees will stay on developed trails only in areas where sensitive species are present.
- Trainees will avoid steep slopes and feeder bluffs.
- Trainees will avoid active restoration sites or any restored areas off limits to the public.
- All Natural Area Preserves (a Washington State Parks Classification and Land Management Plan classification) will be excluded from use areas.
- The Navy shall conduct before and after monitoring, assessment and reporting on the condition of submerged aquatic vegetation and riparian vegetation and invasive species at sites where training activity exceeds 3 visits/year.
- During training activities, Navy staff will monitor for the presence of listed state and federal species and will not harass, harm, pursue, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct. The Navy shall conduct monitoring at training sites to track potential impacts to listed species for a biologically appropriate timeframe post-training activity.
- The Navy will avoid conducting shall not conduct trainings during nesting windows for listed species in parks where those species exists.
- The Navy will avoid areas within 300 feet of nest sites for identified raptor species during breeding seasons.
- No boats will be landed within shores designated within the Natural Areas classification.
- The Navy shall conduct before and after monitoring, assessment and reporting on the occurrence and local abundance of species of conservation concern at sites where training activity exceeds 3 visits/year. The Navy and State Parks have identified a number of important measures that will help minimize and avoid impacts to sensitive natural resources, including birds. For these measures to be successful, we recommend two overarching actions:
  - A funding mechanism to support Washington State Parks Natural Resource Department’s role in overseeing site-based resource protection.
  - Development and implementation of a comprehensive biological monitoring program at state parks for sensitive plant and animal species to track and mitigate for impacts resulting from naval training activities. Please don’t hesitate to contact us if you have questions about the recommendations in this letter.

**I am asking you to NOT issue a new Navy permit allowing military training in 29 of our State Parks. The permit(s) are in direct opposition to the role and purpose of these natural lands and adjacent waterways. Our parks exist as places for people to enjoy natures' wonders. Parks provide a restorative environment for we citizens--places to enjoy the beauty and quiet of nature and get away from the stresses of modern life. I know I speak for myself and family members and friends who've camped, hiked, picnicked in Washington parks for decades. Preserve these parks for the reason they were established--for people to enjoy and NOT to be debased by Navy military training.**

**Tweet: @POTUS @USNavy @npproject Isn’t it bad enough the Navy torments sea mammals that humans have to face these ridiculous war games in our homes? Buy them a beach if they have to play in the sand with bang-bangs, for godlet’s sakes. #Navy #parks #wargames https://files.constantcontact.com/f1c93a4d401/f005e290-6011-45df-aee4-4ead88f8c8c0.pdf**

**I am writing this in support of the Navy’s plan to expand locations for military exercises in NW Washington and State Parks. After reading an article in the South Whidbey Review (February 11, 2020), I felt compelled to voice approval of the Navy’s plan to properly train SEAL personnel.**
As Steve Erickson of Whidbey Environmental Action Network (WEAN) "believes decision making is a participatory activity", I am sure he is respectful of my opinion.

BACKGROUND
My family has a long history of support for the government, military and local installations. My father who was career Navy, along with my uncles and numerous cousins in all branches of the military (Army, Navy, Marines & Air Force), served in World War II, Korean War, Vietnam and most recently the Middle East. My grandfather, Bennie George, was one of the first applicants at the Keyport Torpedo Station and was assigned Badge #17. After military service my uncles and several cousins continued careers at Bremerton Naval Shipyard, Keyport and Bangor Trident Sub Base. My husband was a combat Marine stationed in Vietnam and my stepson a Marine Corp Helicopter Pilot. My son-in-law is a West Point Graduate and I have a nephew who is currently a candidate to West Point. Additionally, I have a cousin whose name is engraved at the Arizona Memorial in Pearl Harbor as one soul lost that fateful day. We are multi-generations of military patriots.

Also, I am a local Native American and an Elder in my Suquamish Tribe.

ISSUE
The question in issue is - Should the Washington Parks & Recreation Department grant the Navy "right-of-permit" to continue training in State Parks and Public Land? My response – yes.

In the South Whidbey Record, Sheila Murray, Public Affairs for Navy Region Northwest, clearly provided contextual references, inclusive of: 1. State permits required before activities; 2. Private property owners sign right-of-way agreements; 3. Parks operate normally during training; 4. No - live ammunition, demolition, structures, devices, manned air operations, vegetation cutting, campfires or leaving waste; 5. A 30 year safety record without issues or complaints; 6. SEALS complete their training without leaving a trace of their presence; and 7. Emphasis of the importance of providing varied property features to adequately prepare for environments our Navy Seals may encounter on deployment.

WA PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
RE: E-1 NAVAL SPECIAL OPERATIONS TRAINING IN WASHINGTON STATE PARKS
January 26, 2021
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In response to Marianne Edain's, WEAN member, thoughts of our military as "spying", "creepy", "threatening" or "huge potential of disaster", I disagree. We live near state parks and my grandsons, who have heard stories from their US Marine Corps father's OCS training and their Poppo's bootcamp training, will now enjoy attempting to detect any sign of SEALS' activity. My husband and I had previously offered our beachfront property in the San Juan Islands for a potential SEAL training site. That offer still stands.

Ms. Edain erroneously referenced an incident in North Carolina where military were "pretending to be terrorists". The February 24, 2002 article about the Green Berets training across 9 North Carolina counties, quotes "The soldiers were driving in an unmarked vehicle and dressed in civilian clothing
(not posing as terrorists), “the soldiers believed the deputy was part of the training exercise”, “One of the soldiers attempted to disarm the officer”, and “the deputy believed that the two individuals intended on killing him, resulting in the deputy shooting both of the suspects.” This instance happened in 2002 and in the 30 years prior there had never been an incident. In searching the internet, the 2002 very tragic mishap was the single such case in the 49 years of Green Beret training in NC.

Ms. Edain asserted in her documents “concluded the war games would have no effect on historic and cultural properties including those belonging to indigenous tribes.” “the Navy claims to have met its obligation to consult the tribes but some Indigenous groups still disagree.” This is where I strongly disagree with Ms. Edain and am affronted in the inference that I might be an uninformed Indigenous person. When the Navy conducted numerous public forums in the surrounding areas, I took the occasion to attend one such meeting held May 2017 in Poulsbo. I read the public announcements, emails with other tribal members and discussed this with some of our Suquamish Warriors (our honored Tribal Military Veterans). At the forum I had the opportunity to personally meet SEAL members, learn more about what it takes to become one of their elite, and their unwavering dedication to their mission “to neutralize enemy forces that present significant threats to the United States and its allies”. This venue allowed the dissemination of information regarding environmental impact studies, procedures, videos and the opportunity to voice any concerns. Also, Navy training would not be conducted on any tribal property without the explicit consent of the tribe.

Mr. Erickson objected to the March 2020 Chelan location of the Parks Commission meeting, stating “There never is a level playing field when dealing with state agencies.” This is unwarranted criticism of the Parks & Recreation Commission. As with other Washington State Commissions, this board has six regular meetings a year in pre-determined locations around the state. A statewide schedule affords wide variety of participation from many communities and meeting dates can be easily accessed on any state Commission’s website.

Unfortunately, the unprecedented impact of the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic has had far reaching effects on every person (young & older). As we struggle to attain a semblance of normal, it is gratifying to be afforded this opportunity to participate virtually in this Commission’s meeting.

CONCLUSION
I realize this is a lengthy response, but I appreciate the Washington Parks & Recreation Commission allowing me this opportunity. I express my wholehearted support of the Navy’s request for personnel to engage in “Naval Special Operations Training” at up to 29 state parks, four county sites, eight city sites, 17 other public sites and any additional necessary locations within Washington State.

As previously publicly stated, this issue has the attention of Island County Democrats and the State Democratic Party. This is an excellent reminder to elected and political parties of how much the United States Navy / Military contributes to local communities with local jobs, local revenues, local
tides, local growth, local school systems, local economies and local voter base. Our elected officials need to support those who support them.

We enjoy all freedoms due to selfless dedication of these young men and women. Their bravery is legendary with significant triumphs. The very least we can do is assist these heroes by providing a venue to achieve their mission in protecting our freedoms. 14

: I am writing on behalf of the Board and members of the Olympic Forest Coalition to comment on the Navy Special Operations Training in Western Washington application for permission to use 28 State Parks for cold water insertion training and other activities. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important permit application. Our organization urges the Commission to reject the Navy’s permit application, and to withdraw permission allowing current use of state Parks for Navy training, for the reasons described below. The need for adequate training of our military personnel is a national security matter, and our organization recognizes and appreciates the service and sacrifice of generations of men and women in uniform. Adequate training to ensure our service members are prepared to meet every challenge is critical to national security and their safety. However, it is the duty of citizens in democratic society to point out where military activities unnecessarily contradict environmental laws, may risk public health and safety, restrict public enjoyment of publicly funded State parks, and contradict the purpose of public recreational facilities. 1. Reasonable and readily available alternatives. The Navy has sufficient lands to conduct the training they propose for state parks. The Navy owns 46 miles of shoreline and 151,975 acres of land in this region yet proposes to conduct “realistic” combat training along 265 miles of western Puget Sound shoreline that includes the proposed 28 state parks. “Realistic” means training among civilians in state parks, whether or not permission from those individuals has been granted. In materials provided to the Commissioners,1 the Navy states that there are no alternatives to using state parks and that it “will not be conducting surveillance of any members of the public, either through trainees or unmanned aircraft.” It does not address the fact that surveillance can easily be conducted with handheld or remotely planted devices. While the Navy states that it will instead employ its own designated “actors” upon whom such surveillance will be performed, handheld surveillance technology such as that in use by many police departments casts a wide electronic net with the potential for gathering the cellphone data of everyone in the area. Even “eyeballs” on the actors requires surveilling others in order to locate him/her. Actors embedded among civilian families who are camping or picnicking are likely to create this unavoidable scenario, leading to potential Fourth Amendment violations against those families who happen to be near the actor, not to mention trauma if Navy participants are 1 Letter, Department of the Navy to Don Hoch, State Parks Commissioner, December 4, 2020. Paragraph 3. https://parks.state.wa.us/DocumentCenter/View/16268/08-Parks-Questions-and-Navy-Response 2 The RPA states the trainings will occur between January and May, and June and November during the year, mostly during daylight hours. This training can last from 2 to 72 hours, and most of the selected sites are, according to Navy documents, slated for between six and eighteen training visits per year. The Navy seeks permission to use the entire park. Trainees would come ashore in mini-subs, cross the beach, climb the bluff, and conceal in the landscape while observing the public for up to 72 hours before reversing and leaving the site. According to Navy documents, Navy observers would be stationed at the site of
the activity and would engage with any civilians who find themselves close to the activity. In this
violent climate with a pandemic raging, and even in normal times, the concept of civilians
encountering armed members of the military in the psychological conditions expected on a battlefield
while they are trying to enjoy a camping or picnicking experience is an unacceptable use of public
parks. Families should not have to worry whether there is an armed person in camouflage hiding in
the bushes watching them, and whether that person is a military trainee or a person intent on harm;
the difference hardly matters, because for a child, trauma cannot be so easily parsed. The military,
including the Navy, currently trains on as much as 188 million acres of National Forest lands
throughout the country, and has utilized other public and private lands. We object to the Navy’s
proposal for military training in any state park, and we urge the Commission to reject the permit
application and withdraw permission granted by staff to the Navy. 2. Full scope of training not
portrayed in application materials: We are concerned about the lack of detail provided on maps in the
presentation by Steve Brand and Jessica Logan to the Commissioners. For example, the following two
maps depicting training that would take place at Blake Island State Park contain markedly different
levels of detail: 2 Defense Technical Information Center, Military Studies Program. Military Training on
Public Lands: Guidelines for Success. https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a208705.pdf Figure 1:
Presentation to Commissioners showing bald eagle nest, custom exclusions, and park boundary.
Figure 2: Same site, Navy internal documents. Source: Navy slide show provided by a whistleblower
and published by Truthout. Use of Blake Island’s marina by combat swimmers is not shown in
previous presentation to Commission, but is on this map in green. Blake Island is one of several sites
that were previously being used for training, before Commissioners and the public were made aware
of the training activities. Inconsistency among the Navy’s documents is not new. Navy maps in
Environmental Assessments on at least two occasions since 2014 have erased major features such as
rivers, mountains, and large lakes, making it difficult for the public to accurately locate Navy projects
in order to assess and comment on potential impacts. Erasure of such detail violates legal
requirements to provide as much accurate and complete information as possible for informed public
decisions. 3. Training activities incompatible with public recreation: Despite not being mentioned in
Training Activity Summaries presented to the Commissioners, “Direct Actions” are included in original
Navy materials that list Fort Flagler and Fort Worden among six sites total that are slated for Direct
Actions. Direct Action is described as: “Direct Action (DA): This training would consist of up to 20
personnel conducting “simulated” actions against a threat or enemy within the confines of a specified
area or building. It would include the use of “simulated weapons”; no live-fire weapons would be
used. The simulated weapons would be marking rounds, which are plastic/paint capsules that wash
away with water. No property damage would occur, and cleanup would be handled by the instructors
and support staff.” To our knowledge none of the Navy’s training program materials have excluded
these activities except for the application currently under consideration. Commissioners and the
public deserve to know if the Navy is conducting or intends to conduct mock gun battles or other
potentially frightening activities in state parks whether or not the public is present. These training site
locations and activities, projected frequencies, and essential designations are clearly delineated in the
Navy’s materials. The Commission should not proceed with review of any permit request by the Navy
as the RPA materials are incomplete; the Navy must address the reasons for these and other
inconsistencies. According to previous Navy documents, trainees are expected to use aerial and
surface drones carrying “payloads” of technical equipment with data-capture and recording
capability. In the current application before the Commission, they are not mentioned, and the Navy
states they will not be used. However, we are concerned that should these activities be added later or
used without notice to the Commission and the public, or without permission, there may be a
possibility that surveillance could include warrantless downloading the contents of the cellphones of a
civilian. This practice raises Fourth Amendment concerns about electronic surveillance of park users
who are not the subject of a warrant or not suspected of terrorism. The Navy has not addressed these concerns despite repeated disclosure in other permitting and environmental processes related to Navy training in our area. The State Parks Commission should request specific information from the Navy about electronic surveillance, explicitly rejecting the training at any and all state parks, along with any electronic surveillance of park users. 4. Potential increase in planned training activities not addressed: We note that “direct action” gun battles and building-clearing activities using “simulated” weapons, along with the use of unmanned aircraft (drones) for surveillance have not been included in the Navy’s application yet are central to this training as proposed in earlier Navy documents. Evidence for this is in the Navy’s nonpublic materials reported by the media (See: https://truthout.org/articles/exclusive-navy-uses-us-citizens-as-pawns-in-domestic-war-games/). While the Navy in its response to the Commission commits to not surveilling the public, we are concerned about potential “mission creep” that could add these activities back in to trainings in state parks or take place without monitoring and permission. • What are the Park’s Commission procedures for overseeing these activities? • Would the Commission be notified of expansions in the scope and nature of this training? • Or would amendments be a matter again handled at the Park staff level, as were the permits for previous training? • Will the Commission commit staff to monitor the Navy trainings to ensure they comply with limits? The Navy has a consistent pattern of incremental increases in activity after modest starts. Unclear procedures for oversight of Navy activities, limited park staffing resources to oversee and manage the training, and the potential for unpermitted “mission creep” is a legitimate concern. An example on point is the fact that the Navy was granted a permit to use 5 parks for training from 2015 to April 30, 2020. It is reported that the Navy actually used 7 parks. The Navy committed to notify local law enforcement of its training activities; it has been reported that the Navy has not notified local law enforcement to date. The Commission should deny the permit for any training in state parks. 5. Segmented analysis violative of NEPA: The Navy has segmented its RPA and NEPA and potentially SEPA analysis to obfuscate the cumulative impacts of its training program. Specifically, the Navy’s 2018 environmental assessment for the complete training program said that 84 personnel would train annually in this State Parks program, but later at an open house to educate the public on this training, Navy officials said that it would be 504. An email from the Governor’s Office responding to an open records request indicates that the program may include the possibility of up to 2,000 personnel. The information given to the public conflicts with the information given to the Commission. Therefore, the Commission should not grant this permit. 6. Environmental impacts not adequately assessed nor mitigated: The Navy determined that there will be no adverse environmental impacts, yet asks State Parks to identify any areas, habitats, or species they should avoid. The Navy assessment was not specific enough nor based on actual information to make a real determination on whether the habitats, species, or areas they will potentially use have or have not been identified. Since at least 2007, the Navy in the Pacific Northwest has not once concluded in any NEPA document that there would be significant impacts, when in fact there have been, both individually and cumulatively. Therefore, public trust in the Navy’s assurance in this case that there will be no significant impacts is also extremely low. 7. Inadequate oversight environmental agency consultation: In 2015 the media outlet Truthout published information about this training program based on a whistleblower source. These materials described this training in great detail. A Nov. 9, 2015 Navy telephone log stated, “Presently considering 68+- sites; on both military and non-military lands.” An in-house Draft Endangered Species Act Determination concluded there would be no effects on federally listed species or habitats, and, “[t]herefore, Navy consultation with the USFWS and NMFS under the ESA and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act is not required.” Self-certifying on endangered species issues to avoid consultation is unwise. In addition, one of the two in-house slideshows depicted a number of selected sites intended for exemption to
public disclosure requirements via the use of NEPA provisions for “categorical exclusions.” The Navy’s intent in late 2015 appeared to be to shield the magnitude of this training from the public and to conduct it without notification to relevant agencies. After the story broke in Truthout, the Navy admitted they’d been training in several state parks for years and initiated a public NEPA process on an “expanded” proposal. Their expanded proposal precisely matched the original, nonpublic one disclosed by the media. Based on the reporting, one of our OFCO Board members contacted the Fish and Wildlife Service out of concern that some Navy training dates overlapped with nesting season on beaches for some critically important species. The Fish and Wildlife Service responded that it had not been apprised by the Navy of this training, and subsequently asked the Navy for consultation. Out of concern that this training was already taking place or could occur without a public process or state and federal agency notification, our Board member passed the information to federal and state contacts, and in early January 2016, to media outlets. We question why the Navy’s 2018 NEPA process included the full scope of activities, yet the current RPA before the Commission does not. We remain concerned that the scope of planned activities will later be expanded to conform with the Navy’s original plans. In 2017 our Board member asked a Navy representative in charge of their regional environmental compliance programs whether any of the dozens of Environmental Impact Statements or Environmental Assessments produced by the Navy throughout the prior decade had concluded anything other than “No Significant Impacts.” He replied none had. 8. Public safety concerns not adequately addressed: Item E-1 on the Washington State Parks and Recreation Committee’s November 19, 2020 agenda, called Naval Special Operations Training in Washington State Parks – Report, (https://parks.state.wa.us/DocumentCenter/View/16005/Item-E-1-Naval-Special-Operations-Training-in-Washington-State-Parks--Report) framed the Navy’s site selection suitability in terms of factors that include training, safety, and logistics. The Navy’s site selection safety criteria did not include public safety. The term “safety,” is defined in the report as “...assesses whether a site would put trainees or support teams at risk.” Trainee safety is very important. However, there is no corresponding statement on whether the public would be put at risk and what steps to mitigate potential risk will be taken. Tragic encounters between armed civilians and Navy training activities have occurred. The Navy dismisses this possibility with their justification to Commissioners of a lethal shooting in North Carolina, where a sheriff’s deputy shot two trainees who refused to “break character” and cooperate with him during Operation Robin Sage; one trainee was killed. A lawsuit in that case ended with the community paying $750,000 in damages. This would be an unbearable burden to local government and communities, and our state government. The Commission must reject this permit application on the grounds that public safety is not adequately assessed and mitigated. 9. Liability not adequately assessed: The Navy will not be liable for injuries to civilians. The Navy Admiral informed the Commission that civilians would have recourse to “the Federal Tort Claims Act.” The Commission should request the Attorney General to assess potential liability for Washington state and should not consider this permit without a full legal assessment of liability risk for the state and local governments where the parks are located. 10. Archeological/historic consultations: At-risk archaeological sites must be identified in order to be avoided and protected. Tribes are often reluctant to identify their most sacred sites because of public exposure risks associated with them being recorded in government databases that are subject to FOIA requests. This was the case in 2018 and during previous NEPA processes where some Tribes refused to disclose their most sacred sites. Thus, National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) consultations for the RPA are likely incomplete. If confidential consultations with Tribes on sacred sites have not been adequately conducted and Tribal concerns resolved to the satisfaction of the Tribes that sites will not be impacted, the Commission must deny the permit. 11. Foreign military training: None of the materials
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appear to address whether foreign troops will be included in this training. Foreign military members are a significant presence at many bases including Whidbey Island, and are known to train in various capacities with American troops. We are concerned that the training could include foreign troops. 12.

Incompatible use will erode public use of parks: Allowing military training is never appropriate among families who use public, state parks for camping and picnicking. It is problematic for park users throughout western Washington to know that at any time, for up to 72 hours, perhaps a dozen or more times per year, combat swimmers carrying rubber replica weapons could be swimming through public recreation areas, including marinas where families spend the night aboard their boats, or when they might be enjoying a night under the stars and in tents. It should be noted that in addition to Blake Island’s small marina, Navy materials show combat swimmers, surveillance, and other military maneuvers in several public marinas in western Puget Sound, including where people live aboard their boats. It is neither necessary nor appropriate for members of the military to be hiding in the woods surveilling passersby on a park’s public paths, or that “night vision devices” would be used to surveil them after dark, as stated in the presentation materials. We believe that allowing the Navy to utilize Washington state parks for combat training would chill park use precisely at a moment when families most need safe outdoor recreational experiences; it could erode public support for funding state parks; and it will send an inappropriate signal that normalizes armed military presence in our most popular and accessible public recreational sites. Further, it would contribute to normalizing the covert physical and/or electronic surveillance of citizens by the military, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1385,3 and could trigger potential Fourth Amendment litigation. The Navy dismissed any chilling effects on enjoyment of our state park system, of environmental impacts, of risks to public safety. Federal and state laws as well as zoning restrictions that conflict with using state parks and private lands for military training were also not addressed in the RPA. We urge the Commission to preserve balanced public use, enjoyment and support of our state park system, and reject completely this incomplete, inadequate, unnecessary and unwise proposal, and to withdraw any permission for current training activities. Thank you for your kind attention.

As a Washingtonian of 76 years whose most treasured memories are attached to my years of camping, hiking and just plain inhaling the serenity and beauty of our treasured parks, it grieves me greatly that there is a move to despoil so many of these areas. Is it really true that there are plans to allow military practice at these following parks?: Blake Island, Cama Beach, Camano Island, Cape Disappointment, Deception Pass, Dosewallips, Fort Casey, Fort Columbia, Fort Ebey, Fort Flagler, Fort Townsend, Fort Worden, Fort Worden, Grayland Beach, Hope Island, Illahee, Joseph Whidbey, Leadbetter Point, Manchester, Mystery Bay, Pacific Pines, Scenic Beach, Sequim Bay, Skagit Island Marine, South Whidbey, Triton Cove, Twin Harbors, and Westport Light. It stretches the limit of credibility to think that deployment of military exercises is “nonsignificant”. Just think of the noise pollution as well as the environmental pollution that will result. The aftereffects of our past military adventures will continue for thousands of years. No one considered the long term effects of Hanford, yet look where we are today. Please, oh please, reconsider.

Truly. Who’s behind this locally? Some ex-Navy cook or deck-washer? Some bored retired chief?

No, no, no. Parks are for the people, our refuge in a time of unusual stress and despair. Do not allow the Military to invade our sanctuaries.

What in the world is wrong with our parks commissioners to even consider ceding our parks usage to the US Navy? The parks I have supported with taxes and fees since 1957 have been set aside for our recreational and educational usage, and for the preservation of special landscape and cultural protection. There is absolutely no legal permission for use as a military training facility. The thought of trying to share these areas with military training is appalling. Military use will negate all other proscribed uses, and you might as well not even call them state parks anymore. We live in
<table>
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<th>Stressful times with increased population growth and we need even more places to commune with nature. Please don’t sabotage our wonderful parklands.</th>
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| I am writing because my family and I opposed to any use of our state parks for military training. I actually can’t believe that this is a letter I even have to consider writing. When I first heard about this on the news I thought it was a joke and thought that it would surely go away. To think that there is actually the possibility of military training in our state parks - a place where I frequently take my 4 and 9 year old daughters to enjoy and play - is crazy. The park closest to us is South Whidbey State Park but all of the state parks included in this dubious plan are of concern. Please vote this down - this is not a good use of our State Parks. Even it is technically “legal”, it doesn’t make it a good idea. The officials who have recommended this move should be embarrassed and are showing a great disrespect to our community and the public by allowing the application. Allowing this would not be patriotic and is against what America stands for. It is up to you to communicate that and vote this down. At South Whidbey:  
• Covert military training, bivouacking in the woods there and surveillance of the public is antithetical to the values and goals of my family (and I thought community), and, frankly, would terrorize my kids if they were to see armed men in the woods. Creepy hardly describes my concerns.  
• If this were approved, I would actively avoid this park - this is essentially a theft of public lands  
• Further, to reach the park these fighters would have to cross a beach and climb a cliff that is now off limits to the public and to our students. Several years ago the stairway collapsed on the unstable bluff and it has not been replaced due to concern about the health of the bluff and safety of visitors. It is off limits.  
• This is a day-use area only so overnight stays are not permitted  
• Additionally, much of the park is designated “Natural Forest Area” which restricts things such as bivouacking in the woods and visitors are encouraged to stay on the trails.  
• Add why wouldn’t the military just use the already expansive land that they already control? That would make way more sense....just like I wouldn’t take my kids to play soccer on a military base, I would expect the same respect from them in not training in our parks. |
| Please let it be known that as a home owner in Port Townsend, near Fort Warden, I oppose the Navy’s request to conduct training operations in the area. In fact I invite them to find ways they can disarm, disband, and shift their work to helping to strengthen our democracy and human rights and equity around the world. Their work harms people, whales, and the planet. |
| I was pretty shocked to read from WA state parks that military undercover training will be entering 28 of them. I find this very disturbing. We enter parks to leave behind the stress of the human world and interact with the natural one. It’s where I take my children to be and observe nature. I don’t want to be wondering if we are being watched or are in the area of military training. The military has plenty of land, coastline, forest, and dessert for training. I am strongly opposed to this happening. Please help us maintain what little natural land we still have. |
| I am horticulturist, instructor, artist and musician. I depend on our parks to keep my connection to nature alive, to inspire me and to offer my creativity and talents to others. War Games would eliminate the space needed for this type of interaction. Our highly esteemed Washington State Parks are established as recreational places. These places of nature offer opportunities for us to be re-create ourselves and participate with the living world around us. They are havens, especially during Covid, to breathe, stretch and move in safety. They are outdoor classrooms and interpretive stations: areas to be cherished. |
They are VITAL to living beings including the 2 and 4 legged creatures, winged ones, ones with flippers and fins as well as those with roots, waves and currents.

Militarization of our parks is not a part of Parks’ mission or vision:

MISSION: The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission cares for Washington’s most treasured lands, waters, and historic places. State parks connect all Washingtonians to their diverse natural and cultural heritage and provide memorable recreational and educational experiences that enhance their lives.

VISION: Washington’s State parks will be cherished destinations with natural, cultural, recreational, artistic, and interpretive experiences that all Washingtonians enjoy, appreciate, and proudly support. The U.S. military already controls 46 miles of coastline for its operations. I feel that is adequate for their needs.

They do not need to violate the mission and vision of our Parks for War Games.

It would only further make militarization of our culture more prominent: an unhealthy move at a time when we must find ways to live in peace.

WASHINGTON STATE PARKS ARE NOT A PLACE FOR WAR GAMES AND THE MILITARY!

As we already experience, the extreme noise from current Naval Growler operations negatively impacts income from tourism and recreation in our parks. This War Games move will further this impact, counteracting the needed income to keep parks thriving.

Please say NO War Games in our parks.

Mitigations drafted by the Park...I oppose the ROE’s for any of our State Parks!

Our State Parks mission is to preserve, care for and enable citizens to enjoy our parks free of any military presence! The parks are publicly owned and funded. Who wants to travel to a State Park only to find military activity going on? A reduction of public usage would result in a reduction of tourism and financial support which is important for surrounding communities.

I live in Port Townsend! I am outraged that our precious and historic Fort Worden and Fort Flagler would be negatively impacted in such a profound way! Cancel our family reunion plans...

We on the peninsula have endured so much noise and consternation from Whidbey Island’s Navy activities. Enough is enough! WE WANT AND DESERVE CONTAINMENT OF ANY EXPANSION OF THE NAVY’S IMPACT ON OUR OLYMPIC NATIONAL FOREST AND PARK, OUR STATE PARKS, OUR PUBLIC BEACHES AND OUR ENDANGERED SPECIES SUCH AS THE SOUTHERN ORCAS!!!

It is difficult for me to imagine why the proposal by the Navy to conduct clandestine training on our public beaches and parks is even under discussion. How would we the people benefit from this? I see only downsides to this activity: for the citizens attempting to recreate in our public park lands, for wildlife in the water and on land, and for the environment. All of this downside despite Navy assurance that they will do no damage. I live in Anacortes, and I can attest that Navy assurance of 'no damage’ from noise resultant from the Whidby Island Naval Air Station is a lie. Almost daily growler activity from that base does severely intrude on my life. Being a heavy (and very appreciative) user of public parks and lands & also a senior citizen, I can tell you that being on a cliffside hike & bumping
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into a Navy trainee sporting full gear (including realistic weapons) would damage me, & might be the last time I get to appreciate such beauty. All of that, plus it is just so creepy, and not in a Halloween-tingle-my-spine way, but in a this-is-really-frightening way.

You, Commissioners, more than most citizens, know that the mission of WA State Parks is to "connect all Washingtonians to their diverse natural and cultural heritage and provide memorable recreational and educational experiences that enhance their lives". If we are to be terrorized in those parks by military training exercises such as the Navy proposes, then where on earth do we go for those 'memorable recreational and educational experiences' meant to enhance our lives???

I say strongly that military training is completely inappropriate in parks, and at odds with this stated mission. I say strongly that military surveillance of citizens and brandishing of weapons (even simulated weapons) is the antithesis of this stated mission. Military training in public parks would lay ground for confrontations and accidents waiting to happen.

Please represent me and many thousands like me: deny the Navy proposal for military use of our precious park lands.

I am writing to urge you to deny this request by the Navy to use our state parks for this clandestine training and wrote a comment earlier.

I am now asking if the Navy has done its due diligence by completing the Section 106 compliance as required by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended)? This training is a federal action, which requires going through this public process, and I’ve seen nothing on this. Federal agencies that have the potential to impact National Register listed or eligible cultural resources, directly or indirectly, by their proposed actions, must go through the 106 process. No agency is exempt from this process. This training has the potential to impact many state parks that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places, including Fort Worden, Fort Flagler, Fort Casey, Fort Ebey, Deception Pass, among others. Forts Ebey and Casey are also within the boundaries of a national park system unit Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve. These cultural resources must be protected from adverse actions resulting from this training. The Section 106 process identifies through a public process, separate from any EIS or EA process, any such adverse effects.

I hope State parks ensures the Navy completes the Section 106 process prior to engaging in any discussion with the Navy and for sure before taking any kind of vote on this issue.

I wish to express my opposition to the Navy’s request to conduct Special Reconnaissance Training in Washington’s State Parks. I highly value our state parks. They should be places of peace and respite to exercise, enjoy nature, or just relax. I regularly hike in state parks and other public lands with a group of senior women who wouldn’t want to have a bunch of military personnel using us as part of their war games. With all the news lately of violent militias, white supremacists, etc., the thought of people with even simulated weapons sneaking around in our parks is frightening. I wouldn’t know a simulated weapon from a real one. The military owns large properties in this state. Surely they could find places there to train.

State Parks MUST BE PROTECTED FROM ABUSES such as the U.S. Navy’s proposal to expand special operations training for SEALS from 5 to 29 State Parks along the Pacific Coast and Puget Sound, in Western Washington.

The Navy’s proposal is an OUTRAGE!!!

Also, decent Washingtonians are OUTRAGED at the blatant denial of science in the SEPA claim that this is NOT significant for the environment!!! Anybody with a brain should recognize that the Mitigated Determination of Nonsignificance (MDNS) is a BLATANT COVER-UP to give the Navy what it wants instead of obeying the law and protecting the environment, as SEPA requires.

People should be FIRED for this abuse!!!
Nowadays American society is horribly polarized. A large portion of our population is believing lies and is consumed by hatred against various kinds of social and political enemies. On January 6, 2021, a huge mob of armed thugs – actually, domestic terrorists – violently attacked and occupied the U.S. Capitol in an attempt to violently overthrow the November 2020 election. Most Americans oppose their crimes, including sedition. But retaliating with hatred against them only perpetuates the cycle of hatred. In one of Martin Luther King’s most famous sermons “Loving Your Enemies”), Dr. King preached: “Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.” It is not enough to merely defeat these violent insurrectionists. We must affirm the truth and heal the anger, racism, and other forces that led to this insurrection in Washington DC and around the country. A century and a half ago the Union Army decisively defeated the Confederacy, but the Civil War did not end racism. Now – 150 years later – some Americans are flying the Confederate battle flag. This is the flag of people who were so obsessed with supporting slavery that they broke away from the U.S. and made war against the U.S. government. We must take strong political (constitutional, legal) actions to stop the crimes. But those actions will NOT solve the underlying problems of ignorance, racism, fascism or cruelty. We need to figure out how to ACTUALLY HEAL the underlying problems. Nonviolence is a crucial part of this. See the November and December 2020 TV programs about de-polarizing American society. They’re at the “TV Programs” part of my blog, www.parallaxperspectives.org Some people who have left violent gangs (urban, racist, right-wing, etc.) have been reaching out to their fellow gang members to help them escape and heal. We need to figure out a variety of smart remedies for healing the Trump cult members, racists, fascists, and other folks on those gangs.

Please, do whatever you can to prevent militarization of our Public Parks. It will be appreciated. No where in the Mission, Vision, or Core Value Statements of Washington State Parks is there a reference to military exercises. The words used are “treasured, cherished, high quality, dedication to outdoor recreation and enjoyment”. Having Navy SEALs in the Park is not in alignment with these words. With an ever-expanding military industrial complex, a 2021 budget of over 700 billion dollars was recently passed. This is contribution enough by citizens. Having the Navy invade public sanctuaries exceeds the limits of what should be asked of citizenry. Environmental concerns are another issue. The Shoreline Management Act states that the shorelines of the state are among the most valuable and fragile of its natural resources, and there is great concern relating to their utilization, protection, restoration, and preservation. Again, use of the Parks for Navy SEALs training seems counter to this. In its request for use of the parks, the Navy has addressed some of the issues, e.g. avoidance of steep slopes prone to erosion. Accountability for this, however, is virtually impossible with the operations being so covert. And finally, for our area specifically, intrusive noise by the Growlers is excessive. The proposed training adds insult to injury. We have friends who have camped at Deception Pass State Park and will never do it again because of the noise. Can you imagine their reaction if they happened upon one of the SEALs? The proposed training must not be allowed. The Parks are public sanctuaries, military operations do not belong in them.

Keep military troops out of our parks! Send them home, and stop all your assinine wars. WTF?

I urge you to keep our State Parks for their intended use of providing open natural areas for the public’s use. Allowing the military to covertly use these spaces for military practices using off trail areas for their maneuver’s will disturb wildlife as well as unsuspecting park users and is just plain creepy. Do the right thing.
I urge you to deny the US Navy’s ‘Naval Special Warfare Command (NSWC)’ request to conduct special operations training at 28 state parks.

I have three children, 6 grandchildren, 3 grandchildren-in-law, and a great granddaughter, and numerous friends; all of whom come to visit me here on Whidbey Island. In addition to seeing me (and spending money in the area), they enjoy the wonderful Washington State Parks nearby: Possession Point, South Whidbey, Fort Casey, Fort Flagler, and Fort Worden just to mention the ones I take them to see most often. Now and long after I am gone they will care about their ability to safely visit these parks without fear of encountering military operations. Because I live here they have come to know these lovely spaces and will not easily give them up to questionable military activities in the future. Thank you.

I am responding to the Naval Special Warfare Command Proposal to conduct special operations training at multiple locations throughout western Washington. I am horrified that the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission might allow the Navy to use our state parks for such purposes. There is already so much militarism in our culture, do we really need to see it when we go to our state parks for recreation? Might there not be a possibility of accidents happening from these operations that could harm or kill innocent civilians?

We here on Lopez Island are already barraged by the frequent deafening noise of Growlers. I urge the Commission to reject the Navy’s proposal.

We urge you to deny the U.S. Navy permission to conduct military training on Washington State Parks lands and waters. This proposal is an inappropriate use of State Park holdings. They are protected and administered for other uses. According to the Washington State Parks website:

**MISSION**

The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission cares for Washington’s most treasured lands, waters, and historic places. State parks connect all Washingtonians to their diverse natural and cultural heritage and provide memorable recreational and educational experiences that enhance their lives.

**VISION**

Washington’s state parks will be cherished destinations with natural, cultural, recreational, artistic, and interpretive experiences that all Washingtonians enjoy, appreciate, and proudly support.

There is clearly an excessive over abundance of militarization of our area: current terrestrial military maneuvers (some of which might not be public knowledge), oceanic military maneuvers (that negatively impact sea life of many kinds), Growler Jets roaring overhead (negatively affecting a significant number of Parks), munition ships resupplying at the Indian Island Magazine, the Naval Base Kitsap, the NAS and the Whidbey Island Naval Base.

Surely the Navy has substantial reserves of administered lands to satisfy their training needs. The Washington State Parks Department is on the verge of renewing permission for the Navy’s proposals. Permission to do so is misguided and should be denied.

Please: tell the Navy, hands off of our Washington State Parks.

These parks are owned by the people of Wa. Many of us do not like war and would just like to have a PEACEFUL place to R&R along with the trees & wildlife.

I am writing to urge you to vote no on allowing the Navy to use our parks for special operations training. Allowing Men and women to practice violent military actions in spaces that have been protected so that Washingtonians can enjoy nature is antithetical to nature. These actions will rob citizens of access to trees, plant life, and animals that have been allowed to exist in areas that are
unspoiled by all of the insults and incursions of modern life. When our parks are turned over to the military, what will be left? Please carefully consider the the impact that your decision will have on generations yet to come.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my concern about the Navy’s planned use of our state-owned parks for training exercises. The information provided by the Navy: “U.S. NAVY SPECIALIZED TRAINING AT WASHINGTON STATE PARKS,” as sent by Rear Admiral S.D. Barnett, is devoid of sufficient information and clarity to inspire confidence that the mission of our parks will not be violated. Further, my careful and considered reading of the Mission, Vision and Core Values of the parks suggests no appropriate park use for military training and maneuvers. The mission of our parks is to “…connect all Washingtonians to their diverse natural and cultural heritage and provide memorable recreational and educational experiences that enhance their lives.” Nope, nothing mentioned about military use.

Our parks are a treasure created and funded to protect our heritage. Part of that heritage is preserved as home to countless species of native flora and fauna in their natural habitats. These habitats have been carefully protected by past generations of Washingtonians. It is the responsibility of our generation to preserve these habitats within these lands so that future generations may enjoy our state lands and native wildlife. Rear Admiral Barnett’s letter makes no mention of how native habitats within the state parks will be left unaltered by military use.

As owners of property adjacent to Fort Townsend State Park my wife and I are concerned about the sensitive shoreline of the park. This shoreline was recently restored to its original state to ensure that the ecosystem of eelgrass which provides home and sanctuary for fish, marine life, mammals and birds will flourish and not be further threatened by human misuse.

I appreciate your work on behalf of all our state parks. These lands are unique and precious. I know you agree with me that anything that has the potential to alter or damage these lands and ecosystems is not to be allowed.

Thank you for consideration of my remarks.

Thank you for involving the public in your decision making in regard to opening certain Washington State Parks for military training. I hope you continue to honor your mission, vision and values in the future, including keeping the Parks as “cherished destinations... that all Washingtonians enjoy, appreciate, and proudly support” by NOT authorizing covert military use in our parks. I am writing today because I care deeply about sharing nature with children and I often use Washington State Parks on Whidbey Island to do so. For many children, our treasured State Parks are the only place to do this. The presence of covert military training in our forests would greatly alter equitable access to natural respite for our children and families across the Island. As I’m sure you are aware, many studies now show that for children, being outside in nature builds confidence, promotes creativity and imagination, teaches responsibility, and reduces stress and fatigue (https://childmind.org/article/why-kids-need-to-spend-time-in-nature/). How would we do this always wondering if armed military personnel were just behind that bush, watching us? How will we find our quiet and our peace? Where is there left to go if not our State Parks? There has never been a more critical time to reserve our protected lands for the sanctity of being in nature, for respite, for connection, for educational experiences that enhance lives. My 7-year-old son and I frequently visit South Whidbey State Park for just this reason. He also attends Calyx Community Arts School, which is based at South Whidbey State Park and I have been working with Calyx for the last 3 years. Calyx provides opportunities for children to connect to nature, to themselves, and to their communities through year-round programs based at South Whidbey State Park. The children, including my son, practice “sit spots” here: they find a quiet spot along the trail and, spread out from other children, and spend time really listening to all that the diversity of the forest has to offer. It connects them to
this place. It connects them to nature and makes them comfortable and alive in the forest. This is a place for families and children to find connection. I have to believe the military has other options than to utilize this quiet sanctuary that so many families (on and off island) have come to cherish. Besides South Whidbey State Park, my son and I frequently visit Fort Casey State Park, Joseph Whidbey State Park, Fort Ebey State Park and Deception Pass. We spend an average of 2 days per week in a State Park. It would be fantastic to know that we could have peace of mind visiting other State Parks as well. Covert military training, bivouacking in the woods and surveillance of our children would terrorize the children if they were to see large, armed men in the woods. Creepy hardly describes my concern. Will all due respect to the State Parks and our military, I sincerely hope you make your decision in the best interest of the public, for Washingtonian children and families who now, more than ever need the sanctity that our beautiful Parks offer.

I am president of the Grays Harbor Audubon Society (www.ghas.org) and am writing to express our organization’s strong disapproval of the proposed expansion of Navy SEAL training within WA marine state parks. Our WA State Parks are supposed to be havens for all WA residents, places of calm, serenity, for escape from cares and welcoming to all citizens. They are places for folks to recreate safely in a natural setting. They are no place for military maneuvers, especially clandestine ones involving sneaking around in camo garb carrying realistic-looking guns. Park visitors, especially minorities, may be badly frightened upon encountering such maneuvers. These underserved community members are the ones that State Parks works so hard to create welcoming places for them to come. Frightened visitors may never return if they and their children feel threatened. By allowing military use of our state parks, you may be selectively endorsing use only by certain communities, the opposite of what your mission says.

On the natural scene, our marine state parks are merely tiny dots of healthy habitat in the larger scope of the entire coast. They support endangered species both on land and on water. Aquatic ecosystems are fragile, both the aquatic vegetation and aquatic animal species. The presence of boats and underwater activities will most assuredly cause damage. Likewise beach and dune activities, or inland in the shrub/tree areas, may be the cause of damage to fragile vegetation and frighten off the wildlife within. Nesting birds, denning mammals and sensitive amphibians will be at risk.

GHAS recognizes that SEAL training is needed to keep military personnel safe when they must go to hostile places. However, this training should take place away from sensitive and highly visited state parks. These comments incorporate by reference comments submitted by Friends of Grays Harbor, Twin Harbors Waterkeepers, Sierra Club, Sound Defense Alliance and Whidbey Island Environmental Action Network.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal.

I continue to find it incredulous that the Navy(God bless them) would try again to blend their training into public areas. Please do not okay this to happen.

The Navy has already taken over our airspace with jets screaming overhead at 120 dB. Please do not let them take over our parks! Once they have control their mission is priority and they have no regard for anything that gets in their way! Thank you much.

I live in Whatcom County and I am probably in one of the State parks on a weekly basis. I enjoy walking, paddling, hiking and biking and find each of our state parks have their own unique environment and qualities. I live near both Larrabee State Park and Birch Bay State Park. Day trips have taken me to Deception Pass, Moran, Fort Ebey and I could go on because I have visited over 35 State Parks in the last 10 years. Even while living near these I have had the opportunity to camp in them which affords the time to be among the trees, walk the beaches and just rest in the quiet and solitude of the natural environment. I also spend time on day. Lastly, when thinking about vacations we spend every summer visiting at least two different parks; this year it was Mount Pilchuck and Ocean City.
I find the State Parks’ determination of nonsignificance for the Naval Special Operations Training in Washington State Parks RCW 42.30.080 Item E-1 offensive to those of us who visit the parks for peace, quiet, solitude as well as recreation. I fail to see how allowing the military to stage enactments of combat missions enhances or contributes to those visiting the park. In addition, I am also worried about what harm these maneuvers to the parks’ environment will be done. The wildlife, trails, foliage will be even more heavily impacted than they are now. I personally do not want to meet anyone in camouflage with a gun down the same trail I am on. If we are shut out of the park because of training I will not be very happy when my 4 days of vacation in the park gets shortened or stopped altogether. The Navy has stated it accepts no liability for damage and the state must go through a Federal Tort Claims Act. The parks are already suffering from revenue lost from Covid as well as losses of jobs. This is placing an undue burden on staff which should not happen particularly during the challenging times we are living in now and the near future.

Then, there is the reason why the Navy wants to expand the use of State Parks from 5 over the last five years to 28 along Puget Sound and the Pacific Coast during the next phase of training. There was no reason or rationale given for this large increment. The Navy, as well as our other armed forces have many acres of their own for training, why do they need to use 28 of our State Parks?

Lastly, but not least is the Navy’s evaluation of potential damage to threatened or endangered sea life. They acknowledge that explosive devices may be set off in the water. We have had documented proof that in the past whales have died and washed up on the shoreline with their eardrums blown out from sonar and explosives. (Footnote below) Investigation and scientific evidence must be submitted into the actual effects of sonar technology and blasts could have on fish, amphibians, and marine mammals before any authorization should be given. The Navy’s inadequate investigation of these effects on sea life is very troubling considering the decline of the region’s Orca and Salmon populations. I am shocked that this activity is being considered in light of the millions of dollars that the State, our taxpayer monies, has spent on the recovery of Salmon and Orca.

Please reject this proposal or at the very least conduct a full Environment Review (EIS) of this project. Our parks are our wealth and our connection to nature do not militarize them.

I am against the US Military doing drills in the area of State Parks. Parks are set up for recreation and the spiritual/emotional well-being of the population. These goals do not mix with displays and noise of military force. Have them take it out to isolated areas where neither man, beast nor the environment will be adversely affected.

I think it is a terrible idea to allow the navy to operate in our state parks. Please say NO! to this proposal. The state parks are peaceful places for the citizens of our state to enjoy nature and family. The navy should not use them for operations and warfare training. The navy has shown itself to have no regard for members of the public in the way they have used our National Parks airspace. They do not respect the people of Washington State or consider it their responsibility to limit their impact. Please tell them that people matter and say NO! We pay taxes for state parks.

I write to encourage your denial of the the request by the Navy to conduct SEAL training in our state parks.

I am a resident of Whidbey Island and use the state parks throughout the state, hiking, camping, picnicking, swimming, visiting historic sites...general recreation...pre COVID times...and plan on returning when it is safe to do so. I hike often in the state parks close to home and have owned an annual pass for years now, since the program was conceived. I support our state parks and understand their value and significance to our mental and physical health. I have vehicle license plates reflecting my support for parks. I raised my children to love and cherish the parks as I do.
Clandestine Navy Seal training conducted in these public places does not comport with the mission and purpose of our state's public recreation lands.

There are so many reasons to reject this proposal outright and NOT push it back to the parks to individually decide. Residents across the state are rejecting the idea. We understand the need for training, but the Navy, like all military agencies, has many, many land use options. They have miles of shoreline in the PNW and do not need our sacred and limited state park lands to use for this training.

It is unconscionable to me that you as a commission would consider this proposal and it begs the question: how much are they offering in payment to you in return for permission? Whatever it is, it is not worth the potential degradation to the natural and cultural resources in the parks, their value and importance as safe accessible recreational lands for the public to enjoy, and the fact that you risk conflicts between the recreational users (old and young alike, disabled, out of state visitors, et al) and the Navy Seals encountering each other. That risk is too great and the ramifications unknown at this point to take that risk. Consider the unintended consequences of giving the Navy a yes vote to undertake this type of training. This island is already cursed enough by the incessant abuse of OLF flights.

Please leave our public lands alone. Say thank you but “no thanks” to the military and their cash, and let our state parks be used for their intended purpose: places where we can enjoy peace, quiet, the night sky, recreational pursuits, observing nature, early morning sunrises, playing with our friends and families, etc. Remind the Navy about their very own shorelines where they can set up their own “potemkin villages” and terrorize the “local residents” as part of the necessary training.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and I hope you’ll do the right thing. It is your duty to uphold the mission of the state parks. This should not be a difficult decision. Tell the Navy, “NO!” Enough is enough.

Our public parks are intended to be places of peace and respite. Military exercises, including surveillance of citizens and brandishing of weapons (even simulated weapons) is the antithesis of this. Quite simply, these activities represent confrontations and potentially tragic accidents waiting to happen. Covert military training in public spaces must be prohibited.

I fully support the expanded use of Washington State Parks for Naval Special Warfare training. This training will help save the lives of these brave Americans and is vital to our national security. The waters of Puget Sound and the diverse terrain of our state parks provide unique environments that cannot be replicated anywhere else in the United States. I believe that this training will be conducted safely with no adverse impact on the environment or the public. I ask that the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission support this request.

Remember, the Navy are the good guys! We should support them.

I am writing to you with the hope that you will deny the request by the Navy to conduct SEAL training in our state parks.

I am a resident of Whidbey Island and use the state parks throughout the state, hiking, camping, picnicking, swimming, visiting historic sites…general recreation…pre COVID times…and plan on returning when it is safe to do so. In the meantime I hike daily in the state parks close to home and have owned an annual pass for years now, since the program was conceived. I support our state parks and understand their value and significance to our mental and physical health. Having clandestine Navy Seal training conducted in these public places does not comport with the mission and purpose of our state’s public recreation lands.
There are so many reasons to reject this proposal outright and NOT push it back to the parks to individually decide. Residents across the state are rejecting the idea. We understand the need for training, but the Navy, like all military agencies, have their own lands to use. They have miles of shoreline in the PNW and do not need our sacred and limited state park lands to use for this training. It is unconscionable to me that you as a commission would consider this proposal and it begs the question: how much are they offering in payment to you in return for permission? Whatever it is, it is not worth the potential degradation to the natural and cultural resources in the parks, their value and importance as safe accessible recreational lands for the public to enjoy, and the fact that you risk conflicts between the recreational users (old and young alike, disabled, out of state visitors, et al) and the Navy Seals encountering each other. That risk is too great and the ramifications unknown at this point to take that risk. Consider the unintended consequences of giving the Navy a yes vote to undertake this type of training.

Please leave our public lands alone. Say thank you but “no thanks” to the military and their cash, and let our state parks be used for their intended purpose: places where we can enjoy peace, quiet, the night sky, recreational pursuits, observing nature, early morning sunrises, playing with our friends and families, etc. Remind the Navy about their very own shorelines where they can set up their own “potemkin villages” and terrorize the “local residents” as part of the necessary training.

thank you for the opportunity to comment and I hope you’ll do the right thing. It is your duty to uphold the mission of the state parks. A heavy burden indeed but one that is attainable.

I could not believe it when I read that our military wants to use our beloved state parks for military practice!
Our parks are cherished by everyone, partly because they feel safe and provide an opportunity to commune with nature. If the military were hiding or rushing about on those lands, that feeling of safety would end immediately! Animals would be forced to leave their homes to find more protected spaces. Plants would be trampled. The quiet solitude that allows for listening and watching birds would be destroyed.
At South Whidbey State Park, near my home in Langley, an unusual school exists - Calyx - that brings children, learning and nature together in a unique way. If there were any concerns about children’s safety, Calyx would surely cease to exist.
I am nearly 70, a first grade teacher at South Whidbey Elementary School, a bird lover and walker. I meet my friends to walk, often at South Whidbey State Park. Since the park is no longer used as a campground, the park’s roads are smooth and gentle for older walkers like me and my friends. The park contributes greatly to my personal health and well-being.
Please do not allow any parks, especially South Whidbey State Park, to be used and abused by our military. It is there for all the South Whidbey community to love and enjoy.

According to the Park’s Vision statement that the “Washington’s state parks will be cherished destinations with natural, cultural, recreational, artistic and interpretive experiences that all Washingtonians enjoy, appreciate, and proudly support.” This reads as though the Park Commissioner’s first responsibility is to the parks and Washingtonians not to a military establishment. If you have dealt with the military you know their total focus is on the mission. The Navy can write pages and pages describing the operations, interactions, wildlife, etc. in an attempt to justify their actions. However, consideration of the public, careful use of the parks and their environments is not their mission. Most of the Navy personnel involved in training are not Washingtonians; they do not appreciate, support or cherish our state parks. The Navy should not take preference over the public who supports and maintains the parks through taxes, park fees, Discovery Pass purchases and donations. It is astounding that you would allow some sites to be used up to 36 times per year and for
Combined Navy Comments- post 12-18-20

A maximum of 72 hours per training event. This would result in 2,592 man hours of occupancy yet the Navy claims its activities would result in “minimum” disturbance. The Navy claims that their presence in the parks will not significantly affect endangered plants and animals. These claims are not enough. Neither the EA nor the NEPA Checklist addressed the ecosystems as an inactive whole which include soils, undergrowth, common as well as endangered plants, fish, birds and mammals. The Navy personnel will be avoiding designated trails and be trekking through the various environments. Plans to pick up debris and erase signs of overnight occupancy do not eliminate damage to the ecosystem. Soils are displaced and compacted, plants are crushed, nesting birds and small mammals are disturbed by their presence. These same concerns apply to beach and surf habitats. During twilight and after dark how can the Navy “monitor for the presence of listed state and federal species”? This is not an easy task even during daylight hours especially when personnel are on the move. There is a reason the parks ask hikers and campers to stay on the designated paths and in designated campgrounds. As long as the Navy Personnel are allowed to trod off designated paths and camp in undesignated areas it is impossible to “avoid, minimize or otherwise mitigate impacts” to plants and animals. If park users accidently encounter Navy personnel with their Replica weapons it could be a frightening experience. Whether daytime or after dark to the average citizen the weapons would likely appear to be the real thing. How can the Navy have access to roads and parking areas for trucks with personnel and equipment and not be noticed by users? The park rangers and park managers will be required to accommodate the Navy by being available for check-in, providing directions and other information, and attending to any problems. Currently under Covid-19 the public’s use of our parks is at a maximum and requires immediate funding to add staffing and other critical resources to sustain them. Our State Parks are faced with past budget reductions and facing significant cutbacks in the near future. You should not be considering additional burdens on the parks systems. The Navy is not coastline poor with extensive and varied marine locations throughout the US. They do not need to use our parks for navy seal training. These parks belong to the public, our taxes support them and we care about their success.

I am writing to you to oppose the use of state parks in Washington--particularly those with waterfront for navy seal training. The military does not belong in a natural forest habitat. South Whidbey State Park in particular has a fragile ecosystem and it would be disrupted by such activities (using trails or bushwacking through native vegetation). In addition, families visit this park daily and they would be frightened by seeing military maneuvers while they are picnicking or walking the trails. As an adult, I would be very scared to discover that I was being stalked by special operations troops. It would impact tourism on the island as well, people come to Whidbey Island for Nature experience, not a military presence in a park.

I have walked just about the entire coastline on Whidbey Island and I know of numerous locations where the navy does "own" waterfront properties...so why do they also need to use our peaceful state parks?

Our family objects in the strongest terms to military training in our parks. We've made parks our daily destination for exercise and environmental appreciation, and for extended vacations. Here on Whidbey Island we fought years ago to protect South Whidbey State Park, and we're shocked that we must do it again. I fought to protect it for my own children, and now I must do it for my grandchildren. During the past year of the pandemic we’ve needed our parks more than ever. Even desperately.

I oppose the proposed use of our State Parks. These parks were deemed sacred lands by our State to the degree that they were set aside as preserves of nature for the use of our citizens. Although I appreciate the need for training our military, these are not an appropriate collection of locations for this use.
I am finding it appalling that you could even consider allowing military use of our State Parks.

Our parks that I have supported with my taxes and fees since 1961 have been set aside for recreation and preservation of natural and cultural treasures. Military training is absolutely incompatible to these uses and would destroy the very reasons for to have the parks. We live in stressful times and have a growing population, and we need many more places to commune with nature, not to see our wonderful places destroyed. The military has caused environmental disasters all over the planet, and the public is left with the bill for cleaning them up, if that ever happens. They can use the already destroyed places for their training, not our few pristine public parks. Please don’t allow this travesty to befall our wonderful state parks.

I am a resident of Port Townsend and I use the state parks in this area for recreation, exercise, enjoying nature and activities for protecting the environment such as participating in clean-up efforts.

The state parks were not established for military uses and should never be used for military training. As a citizen, resident of this area and tax-payer, I am asking you to oppose allowing military training in state parks and ensure that we protect these state treasures for all time.

I am here to share an absolute “NO!” to giving the military permission to conduct training exercises in our state parks! No no NO!

Some friends of mine were playing in the park with their small children during some of these exercises a couple years ago when some soldiers participating in this “training” jumped out of the bushes and scared the dickens out of all of them! This is completely horrific and absolutely antithetical to the purpose of public parks. I can’t believe this is even being considered.

Our state parks are places for people to seek peace, not practice war. Our state parks are places for people to connect with nature, not be subjected to military training missions. Our state parks should be managed for the public and our natural environment, not for military training grounds.

I am grateful to be a life-long resident of Washington State, and I hold dearly the values of our Washington State Parks mission; “...to care for Washington’s most treasured lands, waters, and historic places, to connect all Washingtonians to their (native) diverse natural and cultural heritage, and provide memorable recreational and educational experience that enhance their lives.”

These core values have contributed to many roles I have served in my community; as a public school teacher, as a parent & homeschool educator, a Maritime Captain, a Marine Trades Association board trustee, a Marine Resource Committee board member, and as an elected Port Commissioner.

I have lived, worked, educated, and recreated, in close connection to our state parks. My 3 children and I have spent a majority and the best of their school years in our state parks, as a foundational environment for homeschooling, where we embraced year round learning, immersed in the natural world of our waters, shorelines, and forests. Our state parks have provided the best memories of my own childhood, raising my 3 children, a sacred refuge to heal throughout life’s challenges, and the place my father experienced his final blessed day on this earth.

Military intelligence officials are trained for war against hostile enemies. Their tools, tactics, and attitudes reflect that mission, and are completely inappropriate for the state parks mission.

A blending and blurring of military training onto our public lands raises considerable concern about the dehumanizing consequences of remote killing, and the social implications of the militarization of everyday life.

The military training disproportionally impacts Jefferson County: Region 1.

Our state parks are the crown jewel of our communities and integral to the daily life & recreation of all residents.

The Navy states, “Alternative 1 is not preferred. Under Alternative 2, all of the training blocks would occur in Region 1 with the options of training in regions 2 & 3. Under preferred Alternative 3, all of the training blocks would occur in Region 1. A training block comprises a 2 to 8 week period up to 84
NSO trainees and support personnel, up to 36 times a year, up to 72 hour sessions. Full mission profile training mimics real world scenarios and includes all actions NSO units would typically have to accomplish during a mission.”

Our State Parks lands are one piece of a larger military approach to train anywhere, and each piece plays a critical role towards expanding or limiting the military industrial complex. If our state parks are used by the military, it would give the military a majority of all of the shorelines in Jefferson County. Vague language gives military discretion to train even if public and endangered species are present!

The public will not be alerted, warned or informed in any manner when or where the training occurs.

Proposed actions include personnel/trainees who would remain out of site for up to 72 hours (3 days) without alerting anyone to their presence or location, simulated combat scenarios, unmanned underwater vehicle and unmanned aircraft activities. Military surveillance activities take place mostly “in the dark” and neither the public nor policymakers really know what is happening.

NAS Finding of no significance; “Regarding public health and safety, the proposed action includes areas used by the public and tribes...NSWC will delay, move, or cancel proposed action training activities if there is a question about the safety of the public. If public is present...the safety personnel will assess to determine to not start, continue, temporarily suspend (wait), or move. If large numbers of public are in the area, it will not be used. Protected species will be given considerations. “

Of utmost importance to me is the place our State Parks provides, where our public can be free to be deeply inspired & learn core life values, an environment that contributes towards caring & connecting to our natural environment. Certain, this contradicts with an environment where the military is allowed to “train for killing” amongst it’s citizens, whether we see their presence or not, and where our safety is left up to their standards?

I highly value being able to get out on my paddleboard year round, to enjoy & research kelp beds, eel grass, forage fish & birds. I would not feel safe or at peace, knowing that at any time, I could be in the presence of & part of a military training operation, to be used as a proxy.

What statutes permit or restrict the military training on public lands/ state parks?

The navy has refused to indemnify state parks and local jurisdictions from damage or injury to members of the public and their property. The navy does not assume any liability of impacts upon life or liberty or the environment. The navy claims that local law enforcement is aware of training and has been alerted. However there are no records of being alerted to Special operations training at any state parks.

Please establish a policy prohibiting military training in our Washington State Parks.

I am writing to say that I adamantly oppose the Navy’s plan to insert trainees into the parks to observe and stalk simulated human targets – us. The Navy specifically wants to use our parks, instead of their own military reservations, because they want to use civilians as props. This is completely UNACCEPTABLE. Our state parks are for peaceful civilian use and are essential for public health, especially now with the Covid pandemic. Congress has provided the military with millions of acres reserved solely for training purposes. Putting military trainees, with realistic looking weaponry, in close proximity to unaware civilians is a recipe for deadly conflict. In North Carolina a deputy sheriff killed one and seriously wounded another military trainee in a similar situation. And who pays in the event of a tragedy? We do. In the North Carolina case the local county had to pay out $750,000 in damages. Our state and local governments are already under dire financial distress. Our parks must remain civilian. This is a terrible idea. Please reconsider this proposal.

As a resident of Nordland, WA on Marrowstone Island where Fort Flagler State Park is located I would like to register my opposition to NSWC using the park for training operations. My home faces Indian Island where quite enough noise and activity is heard on a regular basis. I retreat to the park at Fort Flagler for peace and
recreation and do not want Navy intrusion there of any kind. We already contend with the horrible noise of the Growlers flying out of Whidbey Island for landing maneuvers in Coupeville - deafening and intolerable noise, I have to wear ear mufflers for hours on end to shut out the painful sounds. Please consider using parks that are not located in residential areas.

How can you possibly consider approving the Naval Special Warfare Command (NSWC) proposal to conduct special operations training at multiple locations throughout western Washington? Such operations would be dangerous and disruptive both to park users, and wildlife. Our parks are supposed to be a REFUGE for animals and the public, NOT a training ground for our military! FORGET IT!!!!!!

What is our military fighting for, if not peace and quality of life for its citizens? We would not feel comfortable visiting our parks, ESPECIALLY WITH OUR CHILDREN, if the military will also be there conducting war games. Military use is not compatible with recreational use, and is certainly not in the interests of protecting the natural environment (which is what our parks are supposed to be all about).

How can you in good conscience even be considering this? We are baffled (not to mention outraged). DON'T DO IT!!!!

I very much oppose the proposal to increase the noisy Navy aircraft flying over the Olympic. With this huge country of ours you would think that they could find a place where noise bothers no one, and is not on a location, such as the Olympic Peninsula, that is devoted to tourism and residents seeking peace and quietude. I suppose protest is fruitless since once the government is determined to do something it has little regard for those who protest. But this program has certain diminished the esteem I once held for the Navy.

Our family strongly opposes granting permission to the US Navy to operate clandestine warfare training operations in Washington’s State Parks. The Park system was established for the public’s use for recreation, education, and protection of important natural areas. Military training has no place in that mission. We are shocked that the Commission is even considering the possibility. In addition to the fact that the proposal is antithetical to the mission of the parks, there are obvious safety concerns with the use of the parks by armed military personnel. The potential damage to park ecosystems is another obvious concern. Our family spends a lot of time in Washington’s state parks. It is one of our great pleasures, and way that we teach each new generation to appreciate our state’s natural heritage. My father was a career US Naval Aviator. He would never have supported the use of public parks for clandestine military activities. We urge you to uphold your obligations to our beautiful parks and to the people of Washington, and deny this proposal.

Please do not allow this! There must be miles of shoreline available to the Navy to “attack” without it involving State Park property. Conceivable outcomes:

1: They are able to sneak up and no-one notices. Probably not too hard to sneak up on unsuspecting folks, but what’s the point! Try sneaking up on your fellow navy participants who are prepared for you; that’s the more likely scenario to need training.

2: They arrive and someone notices, scaring the beejeeezus out of folks just trying to relax in the park.

3: They arrive and some self-appointed “good guy with a gun” thinks they’re bad guys, and starts shooting. What a mess.
What earthly need is there for the navy to impose themselves on park property in this way? And will each of them have to pay the same park fees we (happily) do, to enjoy the parks? This is the very definition of crazy, unnecessary, and potentially dangerous. Please, just say "NO".

Military training operations, even with clear limits and guidelines, are still totally incompatible with the mission and purpose of the state parks system. The Navy owns acres and acres of waterfront and other property it can use to conduct this training. Please say a resounding "no" to the Navy's request. The parks belong to all of us. No single user should be able to commandeer park lands for its own benefit.

If you approve the proposed use by the Navy, I would expect to receive announcements regarding the days the training will be taking place so I know to stay away, and an abatement of the taxes and fees I pay for the privilege of using the parks for every day of Navy use.

No. A huge emphatic NO to this. Our state parks are for the public to use to enjoy the great outdoors. The military has no business conducting training in these very special and oftentimes, delicate areas.

I live close to Bowman Bay and Rosario and Deception Pass. I have seen young children, drop to their knees, hands covering their ears and screaming in fear and pain from the very loud jets that already fly over us regularly.

No more. Please, say no to having the military use state parks as a place to conduct special operations training.

I am writing to respectfully request that we do not allow military war games to take place in our beautiful National Parks. These parks are used by millions of people and contribute to the health and well-being of Washington residents. In addition they are one of our main attractions for tourists. These parks are already being heavily used now during the time of Covid 19. In my opinion, the trails and systems are stressed and stretched.

I feel very strongly that we should find another place for these military exercises so we can maintain as much as possible the beauty and usefulness of our Washington State Parks.

There is no excuse for Naval Special Warfare Command (NSWC) use of Washington State parks. It will cut the use of parks (people will not like to be where the Navy is practicing); it will damage the parks and its wildlife; and there is no excuse for the Navy use of the parks (there is plenty of sparsely settled land which may be used. If the Navy does use our Parks, it must pay for the use.

Keep the Growlers out of our Parks...

No noise, no warfare training....

There is plenty of other places you can fly and train. I live on Whidbey Island and would like to voice my objections to the use of Washington State Parks by the Navy for special operations training. Especially during the pandemic, residents have few outdoor spaces to use, and the idea of sharing use of the parks with the military seems like a recipe for disaster. I am sure that the Navy has plenty of places to practice special operations without taking over our state parks.

Please add my name to the list of citizens opposing the use of state parks for Navy Special Operations training under any circumstance. It is intrusive and egregious to use our parks, which are set aside for recreation, not military use.

I have been visiting my local State Parks at least twice a week for the last 15 years. I find walking in the woods or along the beaches brings me peace and is essential to my wellbeing both physically and.
mentally. I have learned to share the trails with fellow hikers and cyclists and to see, first hand how great this space is for families, especially now the outdoors is our only option for exercise and for socializing safely. The Navy used to share their property with our citizens but has over time, closed off space for their own use. They have acres and acres of unused land with shore access just here on Whidbey and I’m sure in other areas as well. We pay taxes and pay for our yearly park passes and even contribute extra when we renew our car licenses. We need to keep our parks safe for families and pets and do not to be frightened by camo clad warriors. With the current attacks on our capital by similarly dressed and armed rioters how would one know they were safe. I am also concerned that they would not be staying on proscribed trails and would be causing damage to the delicate ecosystems in the park. Please say no to this awful idea.771

I say Yes because I haven’t read any reason why not.772

We are strenuously opposed to military training in our Whidbey state parks. These Parks are for recreation, nature and historic preservation. Covert military training is SO inconsistent with the purpose, mission and laws governing these public areas. The military already has 46 miles of shoreline in Washington: they do not need to terrorize innocent people camping and hiking in the Parks. The Navy has done incredible and irreparable damage already to residents and wildlife here on Whidbey through sonar testing and jet noise. Please, No More! Please share our concerns with the Commissioners, guardians of this precious resource, and inform me of any opportunities for public comment and any decision on this issue.773

Dear Parks Commissioner: The last thing we need in our parks are a bunch of military exercises. I guarantee never to enter a State Park again, if this is going to happen. Let’s get rid of these stupid wars altogether. Who needs them besides the weapons industry and CONGRESS?774

WE WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS OUR STRONG OPPOSITION TO THE NAVY’S PROPOSAL OF UTILIZING WASHINGTON’S STATE PARKS FOR MILITARY TRAINING OPERATIONS. IT IS OUR OPINION THAT MILITARY TRAINING IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE STATED MISSION, VISION AND CORE VALUES OF WASHINGTON PARKS:

MISSION
THE WASHINGTON STATE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION CARES FOR WASHINGTON’S MOST TREASURED LANDS, WATERS, AND HISTORIC PLACES. STATE PARKS CONNECT ALL WASHINGTONIANS TO THEIR DIVERSE NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE AND PROVIDE MEMORABLE RECREATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES THAT ENHANCE THEIR LIVES.

VISION
WASHINGTON’S STATE PARKS WILL BE CHERISHED DESTINATIONS WITH NATURAL, CULTURAL, RECREATIONAL, ARTISTIC, AND INTERPRETIVE EXPERIENCES THAT ALL WASHINGTONIANS ENJOY, APPRECIATE, AND PROUDLY SUPPORT.

CORE VALUES
THE AGENCY HAS ADOPTED THE FOLLOWING CORE VALUES:
COMMITMENT TO STEWARDSHIP THAT TRANSMITS HIGH QUALITY PARK ASSETS TO FUTURE GENERATIONS
DEDICATION TO OUTDOOR RECREATION AND PUBLIC ENJOYMENT THAT WELCOMES ALL OUR CITIZENS TO THEIR PUBLIC PARKS
EXCELLENCE IN ALL WE DO
INVOLVING THE PUBLIC IN OUR POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND DECISION MAKING
SUPPOR FOR ONE ANOTHER AS WE TRANSLATE OUR MISSION INTO REALITY
WE VISIT DECEPTION PASS STATE PARK MANY TIMES A WEEK FOR HIKING, RECREATION AND PURE ENJOYMENT OF THIS VERY SPECIAL PLACE. WE STRONGLY URGE YOU TO DENY THE NAVY’S PROPOSAL.775
To even consider the use of Washington State Public Parks by the U. S. Military for practicing war scenarios demonstrates a disturbing misunderstanding of the purpose of our parks. Or perhaps those in the parks department who make these decisions understand full well that such use is a subversion of their stated mission. Everyone alive has an ingrained understanding of the power of nature to allow rest and regeneration. We all understand, intuitively, if not more directly, that a natural setting and the wildlife therein must be undisturbed for such an environment to support and engender the healing, restful experience for which these public areas are reserved. To say that war games enacted by uniformed, armed military personnel would not disrupt this process is beyond absurd, it is a lie. Allowing such activities will turn these precious environments into places with all the ambiance of an inner city parking lot. Please have the guts and the integrity to tell the U.S. Military to take their destructive activities elsewhere.  

The State Parks Department has an obligation to protect the public and reject any proposal by the U.S. Navy (or any other military organization) to use state park property for covert warfare activities. Secret military raids are completely incompatible with the recreational function of state park property. There is no valid reason for warfare practice of any kind to take place in state parks.  

Please do not issue the U.S. Navy a new permit to conduct military training in our State parks! I support and agree with everything stated in the January 19th letter by Ronald N. Richards, Chair, for Save the Olympic Peninsula to the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission. I realize and support the Navy in keeping the country safe. However, there are a lot of other places the Navy can practice games of war than our state parks. I consider the Navy in practicing war games on public land an infringement of our rights as law abiding and peaceful citizens. This is clearly an overreach by the Navy.  

I most strongly support the expanded use of Washington State Parks for US Navy Special Warfare (SEAL) training. This training is vital to our national security and enhances the SEAL Teams’ multi-mission effectiveness and operational safety. The diverse terrain of Washington State Parks adjacent to Puget Sound provides unique training environments that are not replicated anywhere in the United States....but do closely resemble environments in which the SEAL Teams must be able to conduct operational missions in other parts of the world. The proposed training expansion to additional Washington State Parks will increase the variety of water conditions and terrain to train the SEAL Teams while simultaneously decreasing the probability of unintentional interaction with the public. The US Navy will continue to abide by all environmental and operational safety regulations which mitigate impact to the environment and the public who utilize Washington State Parks. Notably, US Navy SEAL Team training has already been executed without incident in five Washington State Parks per a prior agreement with the State. I request that the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission fully support and approve the expanded use of Washington State Parks for US Navy SEAL Team training.  

I am a concerned citizen who lives, works, recreates, hikes, and travels in areas of Washington State that will be adversely affected by the proposed Naval activities. I strongly oppose the US Navy’s plan to conduct military training in our state parks.  

If any of proposed special operations includes getting in the water around Washington state, I hope you will consider the Southern Resident Orca’s that are already in deep trouble if something doesn’t get done about them. I can’t imagine that the Navy cares about the wildlife here. I am sure there are lots of other places for them to carry out what they need to without harming our wildlife.
I am very much opposed to allowing the Navy to do training and exercises in the state parks of Washington. That is not what state parks are for. In addition, there are bound to be some mistakes made that could lead to the harm or death of innocent civilians. Please, no military in the parks.

I just purchased my WA State Parks annual pass via the Online Auto-Tabs renewal process. I did this for my family and also to support our wonderful State Park system. This support is for protecting needed lands set up for the general public to experience peaceful, nature-based, ecological sound places in our State which are our State Parks. However, the plans to consider approving the Naval Special Warfare Command (NSWC) proposal to conduct special operations training at multiple locations throughout western Washington RUNS contrary to all my and my family’s notion as to what the State Parks have to offer. I urge you to not permit the NSWC to have access to the WA State Parks. Please leave these purposely selected areas in good standing as Parks, not as militarized zones that mar the very nature of our State’s Parks’ intended usage.

Please do NOT approve this proposal to hold military training within our State Parks!

State parks are peaceful places in nature where citizens can relax. The military should stay out.

I can’t say it any more simply: WASHINGTON STATE PARKS ARE NO PLACE FOR NAVY OR ANY OTHER TYPE OF MILITARY TRAINING. PERIOD.

I am writing to say that I strongly oppose allowing the Navy to increase its covert training program in our Washington State Parks. The Navy/military has acres of land available to them for these purposes. The risk of harm to public citizens increases with these kinds of operations. People have been killed in other states where this has been implemented. We go to the State Parks to be in nature and seek some peace and quiet from everyday life. Military training is diametrically opposed to this. The Navy is already imposing on our use of the trails in the National Parks with their constant jet noise overhead. We don’t need any further incursions into our public space.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

GROWLERS Please do not allow these noise makers to bring fear to our precious Olympic Peninsula. It’s already horrible that they traumatize Deception Pass State Park. I used to live and play here as a child. So distressing to revisit and have to hear their roar.

I am opposed to the use of our precious parks for Reconnaissance training by our military. Parks are a place to go and find peace and quiet and be with nature. Our parks should be protected for all citizens who seek them out for the wildlife and the peace and quiet.

Special force training ops have a great potential to damage natural habitats and to disturb animals and even interrupt breeding and raising of young. This kind of training would also threaten the peace of people who seek out nature to heal and find peace.

Military ops in our parks is a bad idea and should not be allowed.

State parks are for the enjoyment of families and citizens needing to relax and spend time in nature. State parks are a refuge for Washingtonians to renew themselves. The State parks are already under sever environmental stress with invasive weeds, disruption of sensitive ecosystems an often over use due to the growing population in Washington state.

Military training is not designed to be environmentally sensitive. How can the State Parks employees protect the Parks from the destruction of military maneuvers? The Parks department will not know...
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where the military will be at any given time. The military will not take care of the habitat in the park. There are no strong accountability measures in this proposal. The scope is sweeping and includes many beloved parks used extensively by Washingtonians. The militarization of public lands is not acceptable.

Everything about this proposal is wrong. The proposal violates the mission statement of Washington State Parks. The proposal violates the vision statement of Washington State Parks. The proposal violates the core values of Washington State Parks.

State parks prohibit the display of guns and other weapons, intimidating and disturbing park employees, volunteers, and visitors. The environment is put at risk. There is the potential for tragic accidents such as when two military trainees posing as terrorists in North Carolina were shot by an unsuspecting deputy.790

I oppose all military training in Washington State Parks. Period! For shame.791

I am opposed to any military operations on our state parks lands. I go to our state parks for much needed relaxation and recreation. I don’t go there to be a participant in war games by the US Navy. These lands are supposed to be managed to protect fragile plant and animal life and to encourage a natural setting unlike what is found in most of the rest of our day to day life settings. How could those goals be sustained while being trampled by the boots of troops storming our parks from the water’s edge. In fact much of the fragile life that is to be protected in our parks lie in the waters surrounding park land.

I am not willing to allow the Navy trash our parks in order to train for our freedom. Our parks are one of the benefits of our freedom in this beautiful country and should not be degraded by those who should protect these treasures.

As a disabled Vietnam Veteran, I would have to think twice about going to a Washington State Park on the “war games” list because to be caught up in such an activity would certainly traumatize me by setting off my PTSD from the REAL WAR.792

Too long have people continued with projects not realizing the damage they do to habitat and wildlife. Noise and pollution from fuels damage our ecosystem. We are now seeing the negative impact and the consequences of ignoring the health of our planet. We must protect our wild spaces. Park management should not be about using the resources but about protecting them. We NEED them, it isn’t a choice, it is a necessity. Be stewards

Do not give permits to the Navy to do maneuvers over our fragile parklands! Our parks are for our people. Unfortunately, there isn’t any place that wouldn’t be impacted negatively, but do not allow this in our parks.793

I would like to comment on the proposal in front of the Washington State Parks commission on whether to allow the US Navy to use certain State Parks for training exercises. I am unequivocally opposed to the issuance of a permit to allow Navy Seals and their large, noisy and polluting support teams to practice war games on our beaches, shorelines, or forests of our State Parks. Such a use is directly opposed to the mission of our parks, which are there for everyone to enjoy. I doubt very much that the commission even has the authority to issue such a permit, and you will thereby be setting yourselves up for an expensive and losing court fight. We do not need this, and our Navy, which has large shoreline bases in several places in our state, does not need this either.

I have a Discover Pass, and I use it frequently. But I won’t be purchasing another one if this proposal goes forward. Furthermore, not a single citizen of our state that I have spoken to has said that letting the Navy train in our State Parks is a good idea.
Keep our parks quiet, peaceful, clean and respected. It is what the public has entrusted you to do. 

I am adamantly opposed to Military Training in State Parks. The Military can go train out in the desert in Nevada if they must. These are parks I am against having this training in: Blake Island, Cama Beach, Camano Island, Cape Disappointment, Deception Pass, Dosewallips, Fort Casey, Fort Columbia, Fort Ebey, Fort Flagler, Fort Townsend, Fort Worden, Grayland Beach, Hope Island, Ilwaco, Joseph Whidbey, Leadbetter Point, Manchester, Mystery Bay, Pacific Pines, Scenic Beach, Sequim Bay, Shine Tidelands, Skagit Island Marine, South Whidbey, Triton Cove, Twin Harbors, Please keep me informed if this proposition is to go forward.

By this memo I wish to voice my opposition to the Navy's request for a real property agreement giving the Navy access western Washington parks for special ops training. First: I honor and support the men and women in our armed forces. My husband is a retired Navy captain. But I am also a citizen of the State of Washington, and I believe the Navy's request is fundamentally incompatible with the mission of our state parks. By definition, our parks are open to the general public for public use. The Navy's proposal is an infringement of that use. Such infringement flies in the face of your responsibility to steward our parks for public use. Nor does the Navy pay for the upkeep and maintenance of these parks. The public does. From the standpoints of dedication and maintenance, you must deny this request. Second: I oppose the Navy's request for a real property agreement because the Navy's request is unnecessary. Consider: The American military now holds title and/or access to many thousands of acres of wilderness for training purposes. In Washington alone, the military has access to over 497,000 acres PLUS 500,000 acres used for SERE training near Fairchild AFB. The military has access to acreages in other states as well. The State of Kansas for example, hosts Fort Riley, home to the "Big Red One," First Infantry Division. Fort Riley spans two counties and includes over 107,000 acres. With the current emphasis on joint commands and joint operations, there is no reason the Navy cannot use parts of such huge military bases in Washington or elsewhere for training purposes. Compare the Washington acres the public can access in the parks you are mandated to protect: 120,000. The Navy has no need for the proposed real property agreement. For these reasons, I respectfully ask that you deny the Navy's request for a real property agreement giving them access to and use of our precious state parks.

Attached are my comments on the environmental impact of Navy use of WA State Parks. How revolting that this commission decided without consulting the public who pays you, that there will be no significant impact from Navy invasions into our parks! How arrogant and derelict of duty that is! How dare you! Step up to the plate of your employers and do your sworn duty! "Dedication to outdoor recreation and public enjoyment that welcomes all our citizens to their public parks."

"Commitment to stewardship that transmits high quality park assets to future generations."

Please be sure to read the attached letter.

PUBLIC OFFICIALS: DO YOUR JOB AND DUTY – PROTECT OUR PARKS! I deeply object to the use of our local, state, or national parks for military "practices" or "exercises" of any kind. I am a 17 yr. resident of Jefferson County and Port Townsend. As we all know, our parks protect areas of natural environment from human development and degradation. Carefully preserved in their pristine condition parks have been recognized for hundreds of years as essential to the health of their animal and plant communities, as well as to the humans who visit, seeking the rest and rejuvenation only untrammeled nature can provide. Military "exercises and practices" invading park water, land, and air disrupt, degrade, and destroy the natural environment – in perfect contradiction to the state park mission statement, which includes these words: “to care for, cherish, and treasure the diverse natural
heritage for all Washingtonians to enjoy.” Public parks are owned, supported and maintained by public money. I have helped pay for them all my life with my taxes. So have my parents, and grandparents. Generations of us have paid, that our parks be protected and maintained as a public trust and heritage. Do our elected politicians and appointed park officials – also paid with our tax money – intend to saddle us, the public, with the burden of proving military operations of any kind in parks are invasive? Poppycock! Who wants to be spied on? Who wants to find armed and camouflaged soldiers on the beach when they arrive at dawn to paddle – like my boating-club friends did just a few years ago? My family and I demand local, state, and national park officials and elected representatives step up to the plate! Do your job and sworn duty! Deny any military applications for practicing or exercising in our parks! Do whatever necessary to protect our parks’ pristine condition!

That subject line says it all. These are wash state parks for wash state people and visitors. I do not want to have them polluted bt military training exercises. I sincerely hope you won’t even consider this outlandish request

I understand you are meeting on the Navy’s proposal to expand training in our State Parks. I am opposed to this proposal. I do not have a regular schedule; my use of the Parks is frequent, but usually impromptu. I am not in support of any plan that allows the Navy to take over our parks unannounced, in an aggressive manner, in a way that makes them a war zone. That is not what our Parks are for. I do not want to take my nieces to a Park and find it swarmed by people with weapons and camouflage. The Military services seem to have the belief that the land and air is theirs for the taking, and they use the rationale that they have no other options for their training. I refuse to believe that is true. The Military have bases in a variety of locations, and they should keep to those. Our Parks are for the public, not the Military. I trust you will remain true to your following statements, which leave no room for military training:

MISSION
The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission cares for Washington’s most treasured lands, waters, and historic places. State parks connect all Washingtonians to their diverse natural and cultural heritage and provide memorable recreational and educational experiences that enhance their lives.

VISION
Washington's state parks will be cherished destinations with natural, cultural, recreational, artistic, and interpretive experiences that all Washingtonians enjoy, appreciate, and proudly support.

CORE VALUES
The agency has adopted the following core values:
- Commitment to stewardship that transmits high quality park assets to future generations
- Dedication to outdoor recreation and public enjoyment that welcomes all our citizens to their public parks
- Excellence in all we do
- Involving the public in our policy development and decision making
- Support for one another as we translate our mission into reality

I was concerned to learn of a proposal to allow Naval Special Operations Training in 28 Washington State Parks. I do not approve of this proposal for several reasons:
1. There is no justification for the expansion of Navy Special Operations warfare training exercises from 5 WA State Parks which has been the maximum in the past, to the proposed 28 WA State Parks. That is a much more significant impact to park users and wildlife across Western Washington. Even if the goal is to avoid detection, just knowing that at any given time, there could be military boats, submersibles, and vehicles in the area, as well as surveillance and reconnaissance being conducted by...
 naval special operations trainees and support personnel, is concerning to say the least. I pay taxes. I buy a Discover Pass every year. I do my best to leave our State Parks better than I found them after each visit. I should be able to enjoy my visits without running into this level of military operations.

2. I've learned that as many as 84 trainees and staff may be in the parklands for up to 72 hours at a time and could be allowed within 500 ft of public camping sites. This could happen anywhere from 3 to 36 times per year? So in other words, parks would be used in this way almost every other week? I do not feel comfortable with this reality. I support our troops, but I do not want to be surrounded by personnel when I bring my family to Washington Parks. These public lands are a sanctuary to many. Opening them up to training exercises like these, in my mind, defeats the purpose of public lands.

3. I am confused as to why we would use any state parks for training purposes when the Navy has 79,000 acres of land and 42 miles of coastline as well as numerous agreements with private property landholders?

4. The last concern I have is with the proposed duration of this agreement. The proposal is for 5 years, but my understanding is there is an option written in to extend it by another 3-5 years. We would essentially be locked in for 10 years? This is not okay.

I oppose this proposal. I don't think it represents the best interests of State Park users in Washington.

I strongly oppose granting the U.S. Navy permission to train Seals in the waters of our State Parks. These parks were set aside as places for peaceful, quiet, serene, freedom from the intense pressures of our everyday lives. The need for these shelters from stress has grown more important in recent years. We are seeing a steady increase in the militarization of our society. For example, the U.S. Navy is now basing Growler jets at the Whidbey Island Naval Air Station despoiling the peace of the Deception Pass park, the Ebbey Reserve, and destroying the peace and quiet of the Strait of Juan de Fuca and all the serene beauty of Jefferson County and Clallam County, even despoiling the Olympic National Forest and adding to noise pollution of Olympic National Park. Orcas and other sea mammals are threatened by noise pollution from U.S. Navy air and sea operations. Now the U.S. Navy wants to invade our state parks too. It is too much! I urge you, Gov. Inslee, our state legislature, and other local, state and federal officials to reject further militarization of our few remaining natural sanctuaries. Please say "NO" to Navy Seals training in the waters and shore of our state parks.

Perhaps I have no power to influence Govt. Military decisions, but I'm going to try. I dearly love to backpack, hike in the Olympics... and greatly Fear the Impact of the Military in the PEOPLE'S NATURAL GOD-GIVEN HABITATS AND ENVIRONMENTS. PLEASE help The Living Women & Men in America by restricting any military operations on the Olympics Peninsula...

It is both ILLEGAL & UNLAWFUL... for the Commission to allow this probable destruction. I study law... so I know.

I am writing as a parent of children who spend their school days on the trails of South Whidbey State Park, as part of the Calyx Community Arts School program. The idea of our children - or any Park visitors at South Whidbey or any State Park - being stalked as a part of military training exercises is extremely alarming. Having discovered military survival (SERE) trainees on private land in my adult life, I am keenly aware that such training is not invisible - even when designed to be so - and of the acute initial fear, and subsequent creepiness that such encounters impart...

In particular, the idea of our young children being exposed to surveillance activities in the course of their school studies is deeply disconcerting. Our State Parks were protected as treasured public spaces and military training is contrary to the very purposes for which they were created. People fearing such encounters or being subjected to military surveillance, will simply avoid using State Parks to meet their physical and emotional health needs, thus exacerbating ongoing mental and physical health problems within our populations.
Furthermore, while public use of these Parks may be confined to trails, military trainees would not be subject to such limitations, creating unavoidable impacts to plants and animals, and critical habitats that are needed for climate resilience.

Calyx school connects children with nature, community and self, and nurtures the next generation of environmental and social justice stewards by providing place-based, nature and service learning experiences for children, families and the community. Calyx students and program participants serve as stewards of the park, and the plants and animals that call the park their home. Military presence and training is antithetical to the vision of Calyx as a “peace zone,” a designation articulated by Calyx School children and reaffirmed by them each year.

My family and I appreciate your consideration of these concerns which are shared by many in our South Whidbey Island community.

The use of State Parks for military exercises, especially involving citizen’s involuntary participation, is an odious violation of the trustee obligation of the State Parks Commission. In no way does this proposal come close to fitting any provision of the State Park’s Mission, Vision, or Core Values. The Commission is creating a direct causation of danger and injury to state citizens. You simply do not have statutory authority to facilitate this plan.

Save the Olympic Peninsula (hereinafter STOP) offers the following two comments for your consideration:

1. RCW 79A.05.305, which provides as follows, prohibits you from approving the Navy’s proposal:
   Declaration of policy—Lands for public park purposes.
   The legislature declares that it is the continuing policy of the state of Washington to set aside and manage certain lands within the state for public park purposes. To comply with public park purposes, these lands shall be acquired and managed to:
   (1) Maintain and enhance ecological, aesthetic, and recreational purposes;
   (2) Preserve and maintain mature and old-growth forests containing trees of over ninety years and other unusual ecosystems as natural forests or natural areas, which may also be used for interpretive purposes;
   (3) Protect cultural and historical resources, locations, and artifacts, which may also be used for interpretive purposes;
   (4) Provide a variety of recreational opportunities to the public, including but not limited to use of developed recreation areas, trails, and natural areas.
   (5) Preserve and maintain habitat which will protect and promote endangered, threatened, and sensitive plants, endangered, threatened, and sensitive animal species, and habitat beneficial for the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of all pollinators, including honey bees; and
   (6) Encourage public participation in the formulation and implementation of park policies and programs.

   Permitting military combat exercises is not "managing" park property to "enhance ecological, aesthetic, and recreational purposes" as required by sub-section (1) of RCW 79A.05.305, nor does it meet or further the requirements of the remaining five sub-sections of that statute. The proposal would further erode our national security by contributing to the concept that military aggression is proper throughout our society and in the most hallowed locations - which concept was tragically on display on January 6, 2021, at the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C. Now is the time to start limiting that concept by telling the United States Navy that Washington State Parks are no place for its war games.

   The assertion at https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fparks.state.wa.us%2F1168%2FNavy-training-
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That State Parks has the authority to permit this use is totally without merit. One of the two statutory provisions referenced there, RCW 79A.05.030(1), says nothing in that regard. The other statutory provision referenced there, RCW 79A.05.070, actually reinforces STOP’s position that RCW 79A.05.305 prohibits you from approving the Navy’s proposal because an action of the Commission, not surprisingly, is required by RCW 79A.05.070(4) to “carry out the objectives and responsibilities of this chapter.” The overriding “objectives and responsibilities of this chapter” are enumerated in RCW 79A.05.305. Nothing in the Navy’s proposal carries out those objectives and responsibilities, chief among them being the obligation and responsibility for all of your actions to “maintain and enhance ecological, aesthetic, and recreational purposes.”

STOP is a non-profit, public benefit corporation registered in Washington State since June 16, 2015. The undersigned Ronald N. Richards is the Chair of STOP, and he has been designated as its Naval Activities lead.

STOP’s purposes include ensuring “the best use of the land, the lakes, and the rivers on, and the skies above, the earth below, and the waters adjoining, the Olympic Peninsula of the State of Washington, in order to retain the unique character of the area, protect its environmental qualities, and provide for its enjoyment by generations to come.” Through these comments we hope to educate our governmental officials as to why these Naval activities are not consistent with those purposes.

All the members of STOP’s Board of Directors live, work, recreate, hike, fish, or travel in areas of Washington State that will be adversely affected by the proposed Naval activities.

The military request to use our state parks for training purposes needs to be denied. It is an absurd request, plus it is inconsistent with our Washington State Park’s mission statement. Citizens need their state parks now more than ever to recreate, enjoy nature, and just chill from the stresses they presently encounter, and that’s not possible with on-going military war games taking place next door.