

JUL 22 2005

Received

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2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
2521 S. Clark St., Ste. 600
Arlington, VA 22202

I am writing to ask you to please consider closing NAS Whidbey. Among other issues the only access to Whidbey Island, Washington and NAS Whidbey is a two-lane bridge built in 1930.

My uncles served our country in World War II one lost his leg. My mother still has the 'V' mail from him. My brother in law served in Special Forces, a Green Beret Captain in Viet Nam.

Civilians opposed to NAS Whidbey were not given an opportunity to state their opinions. Meetings were not adequately publicized if publicized at all. One meeting was held the opinions of the politicians, realtors, car dealers and bar owners were given. The meeting was adjourned without taking one single statement from civilians who suffer from constant horrendous noise and pollution from aircraft. Those in attendance were flabbergasted over this total lack of the democratic process. Does a retired military officer hired to lobby on behalf of The City of Oak Harbor on BRAC represent all the citizens of Oak Harbor? No those opposed to the presence of NAS Whidbey have no voice. No funds were made available for the opposition to lobby. All funds were granted to the few who benefit from a military presence, realtors, car dealerships and bars.

I attempted to contact members of the BRAC Commission to voice my opposition to keeping NAS Whidbey open. I just found this means of contact while watching the hearings on C-SPAN. A request for funds to oppose NAS Whidbey was made to the Oak Harbor City Council. The applicants were informed the funds had already been allocated to those wanting to save NAS Whidbey from closure. Complaints to Governor Gregoire, Rep. Rick Larsen, Senator Patty Murray and Oak Harbor Mayor Cohen fell on deaf ears

and were dismissed. Mayor Cohen is the only official who actually lives in Oak Harbor. Mayor Cohen however does not live under the flight path. She has not had the experience of looking into the faces of the pilots as they fly past homes or losing sleep from the horrendous noise. Senator Murray came to Oak Harbor and observed the pilots flying close to homes and heard the noise. I sent them the comments of Barry Holman about the success of communities where bases had closed. They are all of the mindset that the community will suffer economic collapse if NAS Whidbey closes. They are not open to the actions of Concord CA where officials recognize the opportunity to thrive without the military. They have failed to serve the community by not making adequate plans for possible closing of NAS Whidbey and vast improvement of quality of life for civilians.

Civilians cannot even have a conversation on the telephone due to the noise. They cannot get adequate sleep in order to go to their jobs and be alert. The planes fly at all hours of the day and night around and around the same pattern. My family can see the faces of the pilots when they fly past the deck on their home.

The recent relocation of a squadron from Spain has given rise to other concerns. Lack of housing near NAS Whidbey has caused many to seek living arrangements on the mainland. Traffic is now backed up for miles to and from Whidbey Island. The only access to Whidbey Island from the mainland is a two-lane bridge that was built in the 1930's. This bridge was closed for about 8 hours in June of 2004 when a sudden gust of wind blew over a furniture truck. What will the Navy do if an accident blocks the bridge over these turbulent waters when personnel are needed in an emergency? I can understand why officials could have missed the fact that the bridge is the only access to NAS Whidbey if they flew into the base.

I cannot possibly imagine why this base would be of value to the Navy. I would like to bring to your attention the many misrepresentations in an article in the local Whidbey News Times on May 11 2005.

Governor Gregoire said, " We are positioned to grow." However the City of Oak harbor has put in place buffers for encroachment. Why is this necessary if there is room to grow?

Gregoire stated the military is an “economic engine” that drives the Island County economy. If so why are the islands in Puget Sound that don’t have a military base more prosperous with a higher quality of life? Why are figures on revenues from the Navy presence not available?

The open air space Gregoire speaks of is directly over the homes of many families. The ‘widely’ varied terrain consists of blueberry, raspberry, and strawberry farms, pumpkin and cornfields, cattle farms, a pod of whales, residential communities, recreational fishing, eagles nests, and horses. They all suffer from the menace of Navy jet fuel pollution and noise.

Jet fuel dumped from the jet aircraft is not appreciated. No one likes the smell of kerosene in the air. Jet fuel in the air is a health threat to all life.

Whidbey Island has a noise disclosure rule. Property buyers are required to sign documents acknowledging notice. Noise has a detrimental effect on quality of life. There are many citizens who must maintain regular business hours sleeping at night. The animal shelter has special sound insulation. This ordinance is proof the noise is considered a hazard. Noise would not be a problem if NAS Whidbey closed.

Noise complaints are ignored. Complaints to elected officials fall on deaf ears, action is never taken, they are never acknowledged. Some say they have had hundreds of complaints others claim the person calling is the only complainer discouraging from further calls.

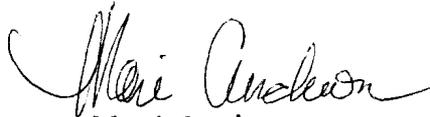
More than a few folks are enraged over the deaths of thousands of fish including whales in the San Juan Islands from low frequency sonar. There is also concern about firing depleted uranium missiles in the coastal waters. I believe these ships come from Everett or Bremerton WA. Storage of depleted uranium missiles is at Bremerton over a major earthquake fault.

What about community values? Families who have lived on Whidbey Island for generations, several since 1840 cherish their lifestyle. My family has lived on Whidbey Island since 1910. Many

have built their own homes with the help of all family members. They have raised their families, planted trees and been good stewards of the land. They have paid taxes for generations. Their lifestyle was seriously disrupted in 1940 with the arrival of the Navy. Quality of life has gradually declined. The pioneers on Whidbey Island choose to stay and keep their legacy. These citizens are not dependent on NAS Whidbey for their livelihood. Why must they sacrifice their peace of mind and quality of life for NAS Whidbey?

NAS Whidbey personnel have no respect for private property. They have come on my family's land to hunt without permission. They leave the ducks in the field to rot. Do they know or care if children are playing in the fields? A retired navy man tried to get the Island County Commissioners to designate private land for public fishing. There is plenty of public land available for this purpose. Civilians have had enough land seized in 1940 for the sake of the navy.

Respectfully,



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BRAC Commission

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WHIDBEY NEWS-TIMES

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Wreck closes bridge

By Nathan Whalen

Wind gusts are believed to be the cause of a head-on collision that closed the Deception Pass Bridge Friday morning, left an 18-wheeler teetering over the guardrail that kept it from plummeting more than 150-feet to the water below, and delayed hundreds of rush-hour motorists for hours.

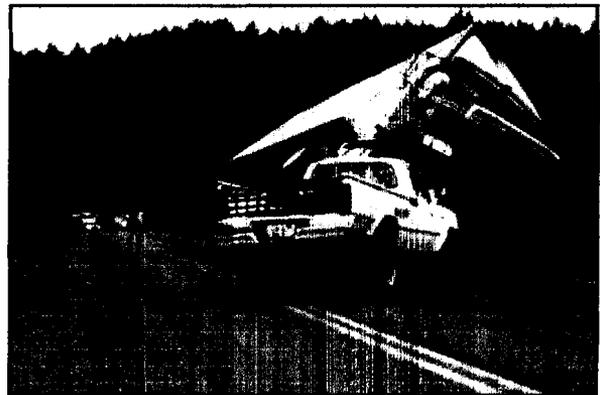
At approximately 7 a.m., Vancouver resident Gene Schaible, a 47-year-old truck driver transporting furniture to Oak Harbor, was traveling south on Highway 20.

As he drove onto the bridge, wind gusts lifted the trailer and started pushing it into the northbound lane. Schaible said his cab eventually drifted over into oncoming traffic.

Schaible said it was the first heavy gust that he experienced Friday. "I didn't feel a thing until I got out on the bridge. Then it was too late," he said.

After seeing a pickup traveling north over the bridge, he slammed on the brakes. However, the two vehicles collided and the pickup ended up under the front wheel of the semi.

Schaible found himself looking down on the water and had to climb out



Nathan Whalen

a semi truck teeters over the guard rail at the Deception Pass Bridge Friday after colliding with a pickup. No one was seriously injured in the accident that closed the bridge for more than 7 hours Friday morning.

of the truck through the passenger door.

The wind was able to lift the trailer because of the light load, Schaible said.

The driver of the 1981 Toyota pickup, Oak Harbor resident Charol Brodt, was transported to Whidbey General Hospital where he was treated and released. Schaible was uninjured and remained at the scene while rescue crews determined how to clean up the accident.

They thought the best course of action was to wait for weather conditions to improve before attempting to move either vehicle.

"We're basically at the mercy of the weather at this point," said State Patrol Sgt. Don Ney.

Island County Fire District Chief Marv Koorn said that the winds were sustained at around 50 mph with at least one gust reaching 70 mph.

He added that the wind speed presented a great risk of injury.

Cleanup crews spent the morning monitoring the wind and waiting for conditions to improve.

By approximately 1 p.m., the winds died down enough for tow trucks to venture onto the bridge and remove the vehicles.

Koorn added that the bridge was opened for traffic half an hour later.

"It came over real gentle," Koorn said, describing removal of the semi.

"I was surprised how easy it came over."

The bridge itself sustained minor damage to the handrail and cable. Kim Glass, maintenance supervisor for the Washington State Department of Transportation, said the bridge structure wasn't damaged.

Because of the bridge closure, traffic was turned back at Cornet Bay Road. However, several people waited in hopes of a rapid cleanup.

Oak Harbor resident George Marin was traveling to work in Mount Vernon. He was about three cars behind the pickup when the vehicles collided.

"I approached the bridge and saw the truck lights at an odd angle,"

Marin said. He spent about a half an hour on the bridge before he could turn around.

Instead of heading home, he spent the morning at the Whidbey Market near the Deception Pass State Park in hopes of making it to work.

"At least I'll know when (the bridge) is going to be open," Marin said.

He waited with fellow Oak Harbor resident, Roxanna Moser. She was trying to get to Whitney Elementary School in Anacortes where she is a kindergarten teacher.

After spending the first part of her morning waiting for the bridge to open, she decided on a different course. She drove south to catch the Clinton ferry.

?I have 36 five-year-olds waiting,? Moser said. ?They really need me.? Moser wasn?t the only one that decided to head down to the ferry. Motorists had to waiting approximately 90 minutes to catch the ferry over to Mukilteo, according to a Washington State Ferry spokesperson. Friday?s incident was the second bridge closure in less than a year. A similar accident occurred last May when a late-model Mustang convertible, traveling north on Highway 20, veered into oncoming traffic and collided head on with a semi truck at the mid-span of the bridge.

You can reach News-Times reporter Nathan Whalen at nwhalen@whidbeynewstimes.com.

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