

FACT SHEET:**Accident Potential Zones (APZs) and Their Potential Impact on Central Whidbey**

Summary: *The NAS Whidbey Island Growler Expansion will likely require the establishment of APZs around Outlying Field Coupeville, with locations yet to be determined. Establishment of APZs in Central Whidbey will result in loss of property rights and property value - as \$1.3 billion worth of property lies beneath the noise contours. Numerous existing residences and public services are incompatible with APZs. How Island County will approach APZs, and who will pay for the loss of property rights and value has yet to be determined.*

What are APZs? Beginning in the 1970s, the Department of Defense started requiring Accident Potential Zones at all military airfields, per the Department of Defense Instruction 4165.57¹. The Navy requires Clear Zones at both ends of runways, and additionally requires APZs around all flight tracks with 5,000 or more operations per year.² A typical touch-and-go at Outlying Field (OLF) Coupeville is considered two operations – a takeoff and a landing. Although accidents are rare, Clear Zones and APZs designate areas where accidents and crashes are likely to occur, based upon historic flight data. The combination of Clear and Accident Potential Zones usually extends 15,000 feet from both ends of the runway. Those Zones that follow flight tracks have a width of 3,000 feet around the track. APZ-1 extends 5,000 feet beyond the Clear Zone and APZ-2 extends 7,000 feet beyond APZ-1. A map defining these zones can be found in the Navy's Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the Growler Expansion.³

How are APZs determined? The Navy uses a process called an AICUZ (Air Installations Compatible Use Zones) Study to determine the risk of flight operations near its bases. The last AICUZ study conducted at NAS Whidbey Island (NASWI) was in 2005.⁴ As a result, APZs were expanded in Oak Harbor around Ault Field, and these were codified in the Island County Code.⁵ However, because fewer than 5,000 operations per year were occurring on either of the two flight tracks at OLF Coupeville, APZs were *not* required at the OLF. APZs have never been implemented at OLF Coupeville. Current usage per the EIS is 6,100 operations per year at OLF.

Will there be APZs in Central Whidbey? The Navy is completing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) regarding the proposal to increase the number of aircraft (EA-18 "Growlers") at NASWI; it is to be finalized sometime in 2018. The Draft EIS calls for increasing the number of operations at OLF Coupeville to a level that will require the implementation of APZs. If the final EIS concurs with this operational increase, or if there is any operational increase at OLF, it will trigger a new AICUZ process for NASWI and only then will the location of APZs be known – though conceptual APZs are shown in the Draft EIS.⁶ Once the AICUZ is completed, the Navy will provide recommendations to Island County and the Town of Coupeville, the local land use authorities, for downzoning the areas within the designated APZs to minimize the risk accidents pose to the community.

How do APZs restrict land use? Generally, no new residential development, and the eventual removal of existing residential development, is recommended within Clear Zones and APZ-1. No gathering places – such as churches and schools – are allowed in APZs 1 or 2. According to Island County Code, current incompatible uses with the conceptual APZ-1 include: Island County landfill, WAIF Animal Shelter, Ryan's House for Youth, Island County Transit Headquarters, Central Whidbey Island Fire and Rescue Race Road Station, the Admiral's Cove housing development and any AirBnB or VRBO or Bed and Breakfast properties. Establishment of APZs reduces economic opportunity and diversity as well. When the City of Oak Harbor instituted APZs around Ault Field after the 2005 AICUZ, available commercial land fell from 22% to 8%.⁷

What has been the cost to other communities? In 2005, in a situation not unlike Coupeville, the Navy required the City of Virginia Beach to “*establish a program to condemn and purchase all the incompatible use property located within the Accident Potential Zone for NAS Oceana...and to fund and expend no less than \$15 million annually in furtherance of the program.*” The City established an Acquisition and Conformity Program to purchase properties from willing sellers in the APZs. Residents today continue to pay increased taxes to buy out those property owners in the APZs and the surrounding area. As of June 2017, \$130 million has been committed to purchase 405 parcels, 789 residential units, and 55 “incompatible” businesses in the APZ/Clear Zones, as well as 2,213 acres in the Inter-facility Traffic Area. These costs have been borne entirely by the residents of Virginia Beach and the State of Virginia.⁸

How will APZs affect Central Whidbey? As noted before, actual APZ locations are not shown in the Draft EIS and won’t be determined until after the Secretary of the Navy has made his decision on the proposal. However, APZs generally follow noise contours. The Island County Noise Contour map for OLF Coupeville, based on the 2005 Navy AICUZ study, indicates the loudest Noise Contours - Zones 2 and 3 - cover 14,800 Central Whidbey acres, in 4,800 parcels.⁹ This includes much of the Town of Coupeville, and all of Admiral’s Cove. Property values beneath the noise contours total \$1.27 billion.¹⁰ Best estimates are that 30-40% of these properties will be underneath the eventual APZs.

The US Census Bureau’s December 2016 report lists 12,513 people residing in Central Whidbey Island. Based on the experience of Virginia Beach, likely all of these residents will be impacted by the establishment of APZs around OLF Coupeville. It is likely that all will be subject to taxation to raise funds to buy out existing home owners. Many will lose their prior right to develop their properties. And those residents whose homes are incompatible with the Navy training mission at the OLF could be asked to voluntarily sell and move.

¹ Department of Defense Instruction 4165.57 <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/416557p.pdf>

² Chief of Naval Operations Instruction (OPNAVINST) 11010.36
<https://doni.daps.dla.mil/Directives/11000%20Facilities%20and%20Land%20Management%20Ashore/11-00%20Facilities%20and%20Activities%20Ashore%20Support/11010.36C.pdf>

³ Clear Zone and APZs, Draft EIS, Chapter 3, page 3-44
<http://www.whidbeyeis.com/Documents/Whidbey%20Island%20for%20posting/Whidbey%20Island%20EIS%20volume%20I%20Chapter%203.pdf>

⁴ 2005 NAS Whidbey Island Air Installations Compatible Use Zones (AICUZ) Study
<https://www.cnic.navy.mil/content/dam/cnic/cnrnw/pdfs/NASWIfactsheets/NAS%20Whidbey%20Island%20AICUZ.pdf>

⁵ Island County APZ Codes: https://www.islandcountywa.gov/Planning/Documents/2071_001.pdf

⁶ Conceptual APZs for Central Whidbey, Draft EIS, Chapter 4, p. 4-117 to 4-118
<http://whidbeyeis.com/Documents/Whidbey%20Island%20for%20posting/Whidbey%20Island%20EIS%20volume%20I%20Chapter%204.pdf>

⁷ Whidbey News Times, July 15, 2006: <http://www.whidbeynewstimes.com/news/commercial-land-issue-divides-city/>

⁸ NAS Oceana Encroachment Reduction Program – www.yesoceana.com - Progress Report #7 and additional progress report from City Attorney to CCA, May 31, 2017.

⁹ Island County- County AICUZ Noise Zones Map
https://www.islandcountywa.gov/Planning/Documents/noisezones_small.pdf

¹⁰ Island County – Geographic Information System data from Assessor’s Office, May 2017.