



File Code: 2700; 1950
Date: March 29, 2017

Jenna Shaputis
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Dear Objector:

This letter is in response to your objection to the draft Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (DN/FONSI) for the Pacific Northwest Electronic Warfare Range Environmental Assessment (EA), located on the Pacific Ranger District, Olympic National Forest. I have read your objection and the objections submitted by others, and reviewed the project record, the draft DN/FONSI, and the final EA. My review of your objection was conducted in accordance with the regulation at 36 CFR 218 (2013).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

On November 29, the legal notice announcing the objection filing period for the Pacific Northwest Electronic Warfare Range EA was published in *The Daily World* and *The Peninsula Daily News*. The project is a proposal from the US Navy to operate a Mobile Electronic Warfare Training System via vehicle-mounted emitters in the Olympic National Forest to facilitate training in the Olympic Military Operations Area and Warning Area 237. The Navy wrote/issued the EA, which the District adopted. Upon signing of the final DN/FONSI by the District Ranger for the Pacific Ranger District, Olympic National Forest, the Navy would be issued a Special Use Permit for this training.

OBJECTION ISSUE DISCUSSION

Objectors raised issues on the following topics: Land and Resource Management Plan and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) violations; extension of the objection filing period; impacts to flora and wildlife (terrestrial and marine); effects on human health; pollution; impacts to recreation and tourism; the need for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS); noise impacts; impacts to National Heritage Sites; impacts to scenic and aesthetic values; scientific accuracy and integrity; availability of documents, the response to comments, and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests; new information; fire risk; violations of the Wilderness Act; overall direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts; inadequate notification; climate change; tiering, adoption, past NEPA documents, and incorporation by reference; and radiation exposure hazard.

As authorized by the regulation at 36 CFR 218.11, I did not hold an objection resolution meeting because I determined that there was not adequate time remaining in the review period to make a meeting practical. After reviewing the Navy's EA, the Master Agreement, the District's draft DN/FONSI and project record, I have determined that additional clarity needs to be made to the final DN/FONSI in order to respond to the objection issues that were raised, and instruct the Responsible Official, the District Ranger for the Pacific Ranger District, to make the following clarifications, which I have summarized from the enclosed objection response document:

Final Remedies/Resolution for Effects on Wildlife (terrestrial and marine): While the EA and wildlife effects table provided in the project record together form most of the components



required for a biological evaluation, additional clarity could be gained by further explaining in the final DN/FONSI the absence of cumulative effects from the proposed activity. Additionally, while the wildlife effects table appropriately disclosed an effects determination for each species to supplement the analysis in the EA, the final DN/FONSI could further explain the rationale used to draw those conclusions in a clear path of logic. This could be achieved by adding a column to the wildlife effects table where the rationale could be succinctly summarized for each species (with likely the same rationale for most species).

There is much concern from the public regarding the electromagnetic signals emitted by the mobile emitters. The EA and response to comments repeatedly point out that these emitters are directional. Further clarity could be achieved by clarifying the limits to the signal broadcasted as noted above. This information could also be provided in the wildlife effects table document to show both the public and decision maker that the space affected by these signal emissions are quite narrow.

Final Remedies/Resolution for Recreation/Tourism: While the EA, response to comments, and draft DN/FONSI documented that the use of mobile emitters would not substantially impact recreation and tourism, to alleviate concerns regarding recreational experiences, the final DN/FONSI should articulate that the special use permit administration includes inspections by the Forest Service to ensure compliance with the permit.

Final Remedies/Resolution for Noise: As noted in the enclosed response document, the Navy further explained how the use of mobile emitters would not substantially increase noise from either the emitters or overflights. For clarity, I instruct the Responsible Official to include that information provided by the Navy in the final DN/FONSI. In addition, I would like the Responsible Official to explore incorporation of existing noise monitoring efforts as part of project implementation to further our understanding of possible impacts to wildlife. One such opportunity may be acoustic monitoring for the northern spotted owl, associated with monitoring under the Northwest Forest Plan.

Final Remedies/Resolution for National Heritage Site: As noted in the enclosed response document, for clarity, a statement similar to “the Forest Service has no authority over this National Heritage Site” should be included in final DN/FONSI.

Final Remedies/Resolution for Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Impacts: While the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects were appropriately considered with regard to effects from the mobile emitters, as noted in the response document, for clarity, the final DN/FONSI could clarify that for noise, there are no expected cumulative effects because of the lack of overlapping activities in time and space that could contribute to noise impacts.

Final Remedies/Resolution for Tiering/Adoption/Past NEPA Documents/Incorporation by Reference: As noted in the response document, the final DN/FONSI should incorporate the 2016 US Fish and Wildlife Biological Opinion by reference.

I am enclosing a written response to your objection issues and those raised by others. My final response to the Responsible Official is summarized below.

RESPONSE

Specific to your objection, I conducted my review of the record, final EA, response to comments and draft DN/FONSI. Based on my review, I conclude the following:

- The draft decision clearly describes the actions to be taken in sufficient detail that the reader can easily understand what will occur as a result of the draft decision.
- The draft decision considered a range of alternatives in the EA that was adequate to respond to the Purpose and Need. The Purpose and Need and alternatives considered in the EA reflect a reasonable range of alternatives, consistent with law, regulation, and policy.
- The draft decision is consistent with Forest Plan standards and guidelines.
- The draft decision is consistent with all policy, law, direction, and supporting evidence. The record contains site-specific documentation regarding resource conditions, and the Responsible Official's draft decision document is based on the record and reflects a reasonable conclusion.

This concludes my written review of the project. By copy of this letter and the enclosed response document, the Responsible Official will clarify the final decision as documented above. Upon completing the clarifications, he will sign the final decision and then notify interested and affected persons in accordance with the regulation at 36 CFR 218.12 and 36 CFR 220.7(d). This written response is the final administrative review by the Forest Service or the Department of Agriculture [36 CFR 218.10(b)(2)].

Sincerely,

/s/ Reta Laford
RETA LAFORD
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure: Objection Statements and Responses (21 pp.).

cc: Debbie Anderson, Heidi Hopkins, Dean Millett