Mike Sternback  
Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission  
Assistant Director of Operations  
P.O. Box 42650  
1111 Israel Road SW  
Olympia, WA 98504  

Dear Commissioners,  

SUBJECT: NAVY SPECIAL OPERATIONS PERMIT REQUEST  

It was unfortunate, but understandable that our March 12 presentation to the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission was cancelled. If other scheduled meetings become cancelled, I would request that your consideration of the Navy’s permit be moved to the next regularly scheduled meeting. In the interim, I would like to use this correspondence to provide a perspective, address public concerns, and correct misinformation about Navy Special Operations training in Washington State Parks.  

The Navy has an obligation to prepare to defend our country, and we must keep pace with the capabilities of our adversaries. The men and women who support Navy Special Operations risk their lives around the world daily. We owe it to them to provide the best possible training, and in this case, to prepare special operations teams to move undetected over a variety of terrain without leaving a trace.  

Navy SEALs have been safely training this way in our state parks without incident for more than 30 years. Navy personnel coordinate with parks and law enforcement before training occurs, and the training happens predominantly after hours with small teams and safety observers. The training has created no adverse impact to the public or the environment.  

Through our Environmental Analysis (EA) process, and in prior communication with the commission, you are aware we have made great efforts to inform our partner agencies and the public about this “leave no trace” training, including six public meetings in Kitsap, Jefferson and Island counties.  

I would like to revisit common public questions and potential misunderstanding:  

Myth: This training will interfere with park activities.  
Fact: No parks will be closed as a result of this training. Training will not interfere with parks or the public. Training facilitators coordinate activities in advance with respective park management and local law enforcement. Training also typically occurs during low-usage periods.
Myth: The public will encounter the trainees.
Fact: This remains highly unlikely. Facilitator and safety personnel accompany up to 8-person trainee groups on water and on land. Safety personnel in civilian clothes would be first to interact with the public, if at all. Trainees are graded by their ability to remain undetected during training.

Myth: Tourists and children will be traumatized by this training.
Fact: Tourists, children and other park-goers are not affected by the training as the preponderance of training occurs in the park late at night or under water. This training also happens with small teams accompanied by safety observers.

Myth: The training is dangerous to the public.
Fact: The public will not be harmed in any way. All activities are coordinated with respective park management. Safety observers and support staff accompany and supervise trainees.

Myth: The environment will be harmed.
Fact: This non-invasive training has little to no impact on the environment. Leaving “no trace” is paramount to this training. The training team will continue to depart all training areas with no evidence of their presence.

Myth: Simulated munitions may be used in the parks.
Fact: Navy Special Operations training in the parks do not involve weapons or simulated munitions.

Myth: The Navy doesn’t pay to use the parks.
Fact: Training activities include activities that are common to the public’s park usage, including swimming, hiking, and use of boat ramps where necessary. When Navy Special Operations uses parks, the Navy pays all requisite user fees.

Myth: This training can be done on military bases.
Fact: Military installations are also used, but they offer limited diversity, not allowing for a full range of realistic options for personnel preparation. The use of parks to supplement training allows Navy Special Operations to prepare for a broader range of real-world training and scenarios, improving their preparation and readiness. This improves the likelihood of their safe return from the dangerous missions they execute every day.

Myth: This training isn’t necessary.
Fact: This training is absolutely necessary, as it specifically prepares our personnel to deploy for mission tasking, many times directly in harm’s way. The quality of our training can mean a life-or-death difference for our people.

Myth: The Navy assumes no liability for their actions.
Fact: This training has had no impact on the environment or the public for 30 years, which is the same expectation going forward. As Sailors who are willing to lay our lives on the line in defense of our nation, we take our public trust responsibilities very seriously. We are committed to continue to follow through on any issue that may, however unlikely, arise.
Myth: The public, including the tribes, were not involved in the process.
Fact: The Navy hosted six public meetings in various locations, and participated with the state’s public process as well. The Navy also consulted all affected tribes as part of its ongoing government-to-government responsibilities. Again, in more than 30 years of training there have been zero complaints.

Myth: The Navy will use drones and monitor the public in the parks.
Fact: The Navy only uses unmanned aerial systems (UAS) in accordance with FAA regulations, and within airspace designated by the FAA for that purpose. Only one state park lies under that designated airspace: Fort Casey. Per Defense Department policy, the Navy does not collect, retain, or disseminate information associated with domestic UAS use. While the Navy may use UASs to monitor training activities for trainee evaluation purposes, there is no training value or intention to monitor other park activities.

Being a special operations Sailor is dangerous. Our nation asks a great deal of these professionals. They conduct critical missions in defense of our nation, often under challenging conditions and at great personal risk. Many have given their lives to uphold our country’s ideals and our citizens’ rights. Our nation and we as citizens have a solemn obligation to ensure these patriots receive the best training possible so that they may defend our country and safely return home to their families.

As a Navy leader, I have no more solemn responsibility that ensuring our Sailors have the best possible training to achieve their missions and ensure success and survival in combat. I ask for your support in this endeavor to ensure we collectively provide the best opportunity to bring home safely our sons and daughters, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, who selflessly serve our nation.

Our Navy Sailors, civilians and families are your neighbors and friends. We also treasure and enjoy the wonders of our state parks, several of which stand as direct testament to our shared military heritage – which, for the Navy in the area, dates back to 1841.

I hope you’ll agree that any objective assessment of the facts of this request, and those evident in our Environmental Assessment’s finding of no significant impact, reflect no additional risk to the public or the parks while we collectively serve the greater good.

Thank you for sharing our EA, fact sheets and additional information on your web page at https://parks.state.wa.us/1168/Navy-training-proposal. You can also access our EA directly at https://navfac.navy.mil/NSOEA. I fully expect that my staff will continue to keep you informed, and answer your requests and questions as promptly as possible.
If you have any additional questions, please don’t hesitate to reach out to us by calling Ms. Sheila Murray at (360) 396-4981, or emailing her at sheila.murray@navy.mil.

Sincerely,

C. S. GRAY
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy
Commander, Navy Region Northwest

Enclosure: PPT Brief
Washington State Parks Commission

Rear Admiral Scott Gray
Commander, Navy Region Northwest

March 12, 2020
CHALLENGES:
Complex Security Environment
CHALLENGES: Complex Security Environment

- Complex Security Environment
- Unmanned Systems Advancement
- Grid Cyber Risks
- Social / Traditional Media Influence
- Space Warfare

All-Domain Unmanned Systems Advancement

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY YOUR NAVY IN THE NORTHWEST SECURITY • STEWARDSHIP • COMMUNITY
CHALLENGES: High Operational Demand

Navy’s Fleet Size: Supply vs Demand

Impacts:
- Longer deployments
- Shorter turn around
- Reduced service life
- Reduced Sailor retention
- Less surge capacity

Fleet Size

Globally Deployed Ships

- 108 Ships, FY94
- 24% of Battle Force

- 84 Ships today
- 29% of Battle Force

454 ships

292 ships

108 Ships, FY94
24% of Battle Force

84 Ships today
29% of Battle Force
Operational Capabilities

- CVN Aircraft Carrier
- EA-18 Growler
- Guided Missile Destroyer
- P-3C Orion
- P-8 Poseidon
- MH-60 Search and Rescue
- SSBN Submarines
- SSN Submarines
- Navy training
• Navy Special Operations (NSO) has conducted cold water training in the Pacific Northwest since the early 1980s.

• Chosen for the regions unique environment of cold water, extreme tidal changes, multi-variant currents, low visibility, complex underwater terrain, climate and rigorous land terrain.

• Provides NSO an advanced training environment to be ready for mission tasking.
Why Washington State Parks?

• “Navigating the unknown” training diversity, complexity
• Prior military facilities improve real-world simulations
• Multiple locations provide diverse, realistic training scenarios and improved mission preparation
• Variety of locations accommodates seasonal changes, evolving skillsets, and any site-specific restrictions
• Multiple training areas facilitate minimal public interaction
• Proven record of valuable training, with no impact to the public, environment or parks visitation
State Park Training Activities

- Insertion, Extraction
- Diver/Swimmer
- Over the Beach
- Special Reconnaissance
- High Angle Climbing

*Deception Pass ONLY*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myth</th>
<th>Fact</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Tourists and children will be traumatized.</td>
<td>The Navy has never had a complaint. The training happens predominantly after hours with small teams accompanied by safety observers.</td>
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<td>Navy Special Operations training in the parks do not involve weapons.</td>
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<td>It is absolutely necessary, as it specifically prepares personnel to deploy for mission tasking.</td>
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<td>This training can be done on military bases.</td>
<td>Military bases have limited diversity and access, not allowing for a diverse range of realistic training.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The training is dangerous to the public.</td>
<td>The training will not impact, nor harm the public. All activities are coordinated with Park Rangers. Safety Observers and support staff accompany and supervise trainees. Does not interfere with public use of parks.</td>
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<td>The environment will be harmed.</td>
<td>Training has little to no impact on the environment. Leaving “no trace” is paramount to this training. The training team will depart all training areas with NO evidence of their presence.</td>
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<td>The public will encounter the trainees.</td>
<td>Facilitator and safety personnel accompany the 4-6-person trainee groups on water and on land. Safety personnel in civilian clothes would be first to interact with the public, if at all. Trainees are graded by their ability to remain undetected during training.</td>
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<td>This training will interfere with park activities.</td>
<td>Training facilitators coordinate activities with property managers in advance to avoid interference. Training also typically occurs during low-usage periods. Facilitators also coordinate with local law enforcement on all training to ensure their awareness.</td>
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<td>The Navy assumes no liability for their actions.</td>
<td>The Navy remains one of the biggest contributors to environmental stewardship efforts in the region. When mistakes are made, the Navy makes things right.</td>
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<td>The public, including the tribes, were not involved in the process.</td>
<td>The Navy exceeded all public-outreach requirements, hosting six public meetings, and by participating in this very forum. The Navy also consulted all affected tribes as part of its ongoing government-to-government responsibilities.</td>
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In Summary

- Naval Special Operations is requesting the use of 29 Washington State parks.
- Time-proven, no/low impact to the area.
- Not requesting State Parks to close for this training.
- Instructors will coordinate with Park Rangers prior to the training event and pay public rates for use.
- Trainees will ALWAYS be observed by instructors and will NOT interfere with public’s use of state parks.
- Although unlikely, if trainees are seen in the field, all personnel will depart in order to cause no disruption.
These Service Members were killed while serving our country.

Charles Keating IV, 31
Anaheim, California

Shannon Kent, 35
Falmouth, Maine

Scott Cooper Dayton, 42
Peoria, Illinois

Jason Finan, 34

Kyle Milliken, 38

Ryan Owens, 36
This Navy training is a matter of life-or-death to the young men and women our nation sends into harm’s way – around the world, around the clock – to protect our liberties and quality of life at home. As pictured in the previous slide, some have given us their all.

Special Warfare Operator 1st Class and Navy SEAL Charles Keating IV was shot and killed Tuesday, May 3, 2016, in Iraq during a gun battle that involved more than 100 Islamic State fighters.

Navy Chief Cryptologic Technician Shannon Kent was killed January 16, 2019, from an ISIS suicide bombing attack in Syria. She was the first female combat death in Syria since combat operations began against ISIS in Syria.

Senior Chief Petty Officer Scott Cooper Dayton died on November 24, 2016, while serving during Operation Inherent Resolve. Scott was assigned to Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit Two, which is based in Virginia Beach, Virginia. He died in northern Syria of wounds sustained in an improvised explosive device blast.

Chief Petty Officer Jason C. Finan died Oct 20, 2016, from injuries sustained when his vehicle hit a roadside improvised explosive device while serving in an advisory role with Iraqi coalition troops in northern Iraq. He was attached to the Navy SEALs and was directing the team’s vehicles away from another roadside bomb he had spotted as they moved to a more secure location. He was the first American killed in the battle to retake Mosul from the Islamic State group.

Senior Chief Special Warfare Operator Kyle Milliken was killed May 5, 2017, in Somalia after he and his team came under fire from al-Shabab fighters. Kyle was the first U.S. service member to be killed in action in Somalia since the 1993 Battle of Mogadishu. Kyle was also a member of SEAL Team Six, the elite unit credited with killing Osama bin Laden in 2011 and he had earned four Bronze Stars in Iraq and Afghanistan.