



WASHINGTON, DC OFFICE
1301 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW
SUITE 402
WASHINGTON, DC 20004-1763
(202) 347-1530
(202) 347-1533 Fax

**Statement by Scott Sutherland, Director of the Governmental Affairs Office,
concerning proposed construction of Navy Outlying Landing Field, NC
March 29, 2007**

DU is an international wetlands conservation organization with more than one million members and supporters and has more than 20,000 members in North Carolina. DU's mission is to conserve, restore and manage wetlands and associated habitats for the benefit of North America's waterfowl.

Eastern North Carolina is extremely important to Atlantic flyway waterfowl populations and, as stated repeatedly since this proposal was initiated; DU is concerned about and opposed to the Navy's preferred site for an outlying landing field (OLF) in North Carolina (Site C).

Site C is only a few miles from the Pungo Unit of the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. DU has worked to successfully improve habitat at the Unit; the Pocosin Refuge had the highest number of wintering snow geese of any of the nearby Refuges surveyed for the Supplemental EIS.

Construction of this landing field at Site C would negate much of the conservation investments DU has made in the area to improve habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife. This work has been accomplished through public-private partnerships with the federal and state agencies, private landowners, and other organizations.

We believe the construction of an OLF at Site C would be a terrible mistake for waterfowl and wetland resources in North Carolina and would have impacts all along the Atlantic flyway. Also importantly, it would pose significant risks to naval pilots and citizens of North Carolina.

We have serious concerns about the Navy's mitigation plans to manipulate wildlife habitats to repel, harass and remove waterfowl from the OLF and surrounding areas.

Training activities would be extremely disruptive to large concentrations of wintering waterfowl in the area and instigate an around-the-clock threat to pilots and their aircraft.

As an Alaskan, I am familiar with a tragedy that occurred near Elmendorf Air Force Base near Anchorage in 1995. Geese were drawn into the engines of an Air Force E-3 AWACS plane. It crashed, and then burned, killing all 24 Air Force personnel aboard. Disturbingly, Site C for the OLF in North Carolina attracts larger numbers of species and far higher numbers of birds than the area near Elmendorf AFB. We know right now that building at Site C will create a dangerous situation for both wildlife and people, and we urge the Navy to prevent a tragedy by considering alternative sites for their OLF.