

October 6, 2004

The Honorable Ted Stevens, Chairman
The Honorable Robert C. Byrd, Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United State Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Stevens and Ranking Member Byrd,

On behalf of over one million Ducks Unlimited (DU) members and supporters, I write to express concern for the U.S. Navy's proposed Outlying Landing Field (OLF) in Washington County, North Carolina. During upcoming deliberations on the FY 2005 Military Construction Appropriations bill, we ask that you oppose the language in the Senate Report (108-309) and exclude funding for the OLF in the final bill.

The proposed OLF would be located within five miles of an area that winters extremely large concentrations of waterfowl. We have serious concerns about the safety of this site as regards potential for bird strike aircraft collisions that would jeopardize the lives of military personnel, aircraft, and possibly armament. In DU's comments on the draft and final Environmental Impact Statements, we urged the Navy reject the proposed OLF site if for no other reason than to avoid bird strikes that will endanger pilots, which will most certainly occur if the OLF is located near these concentrations of wintering waterfowl.

There is an extensive documented history of tragedy occurring between birds and aircraft, both military and civilian. In 1995, 24 Air Force personnel perished when several Canada geese were drawn into the engines of a U.S. Air Force E-3 AWACS plane in Anchorage, Alaska adjacent to Elmendorf Air Force Base. Similar to the proposed OLF location in North Carolina, Elmendorf is located in an area that attracts high concentrations of waterfowl. Disturbingly, the site in North Carolina attracts far higher numbers of birds than the area near Elmendorf AFB.

When Elmendorf was established the military likely did not have knowledge of it's adjacency to habitat that attracts large numbers of waterfowl. In the situation in North Carolina, we know up front that this will cause a dangerous situation and we can prevent future tragedies by locating the OLF in a different location.

As a waterfowl habitat conservation organization, we're compelled to mention the site's potential impact on waterfowl. The area of the OLF provides very important wintering grounds for waterfowl that are critical to the continued health of Atlantic Flyway waterfowl populations. Nearly one million swans, geese and ducks winter in this region in most years, and non-migratory Canada geese and resident wood ducks utilize the region year-round.

Our position is consistent with other federal government, state government, and private organizations, which also are concerned about this OLF site in Washington County. Again, we respectfully urge you to reject funding for the OLF site in the FY 2005 Military Construction Appropriations Bill.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Scott A. Sutherland
Director of the Governmental Affairs Office

CC:

The Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison
The Honorable Dianne Feinstein

The Honorable C.W. Bill Young
The Honorable David Obey

The Honorable Joe Knollenberg
The Honorable Chet Edwards