

Press Release

Naval Air Station Whiting Field Public Affairs Office

USS Essex Street, Suite 206, Milton FL 32570
(850) 623-7651 ext 30 Comm / (850) 623-7601 Fax

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**March 13, 2009
Release # 09-12**

Public Comments Still Encouraged on NOLF Extension Plans

Naval Facilities Command and Naval Air Station Whiting Field representatives are continuing to take comments from residents of Baldwin County, Ala. pertaining to the proposed runway extensions of Navy outlying fields (NOLF) in the area.

Residents near the NOLFs Silverhill, Summerdale, Barin, and Wolf are encouraged to review a publicly accessible website that highlights the various options available to the Navy, the need for the extensions, and place for comments directed to the planners. The web site link is <http://www.navyolfextensions.com/index.html>

"We are analyzing the impacts of all alternatives that meet the operational requirements of Whiting Field and environmental impacts," said Sean Heath, Environmental Assessment Planner for the project. "The Navy would sincerely like to minimize impacts to the citizens of Baldwin County as we move forward to meet the requirements of the new T-6B aircraft."

Naval Air Station Whiting Field and Training Air Wing FIVE, the base's major tenant command, provide primary flight training to nearly 60 percent of all Navy and Marine Corps aviators as well as to U. S. Coast Guard aviators, select Air Force pilots and flight students from Allied foreign countries. The current training aircraft was implemented in 1977 and is aging. The T-34 Turbo Mentor is slated to begin transitioning to the T-6B Texan later this year. The transition is expected to be complete by 2015.

The T-6B has greater horsepower, increased range, improved avionics, and lower operational costs. However, the aircraft needs longer runways for safe landing operations.

The Navy held a public forum in Summerdale in January to discuss options for the extensions and nearly 200 residents attended. The Navy extended the 30 day deadline for public comments to enable greater public participation in the decision making process. The website will provide up to date information on the plans as well as give people potentially affected by the plans another avenue to make their opinions known.

The tentative date for the draft environmental assessment and the preferred alternative is May 15. There will be another 30 day public comment period following the announcement of the desired option and the final decision is slated to be determined by Sep. 15.

"Input from the public is a vital part of this process. We have gone beyond what is required by law to solicit that input and we welcome the comments. We read them all carefully and use them as part of our evaluation criteria as we work toward our final decision," Heath said.

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Editor's note: Media partners with questions about this release should call the NAS Whiting Field Public Affairs Office at (850) 623-7651 extension #30 or (850) 501-0433 cell.