



# United States Department of the Interior

## FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Washington Fish and Wildlife Office  
510 Desmond Dr. SE, Suite 102  
Lacey, Washington 98503



AUG 23 2019

In Reply Refer To:  
01EWF00-2017-F-0826

Captain M.L. Army, Commanding Officer  
U.S. Navy  
Naval Air Station Whidbey Island  
3730 North Charles Porter Avenue  
Oak Harbor, Washington 98270-5000

Dear Captain Army:

Subject: Naval Air Station Whidbey Island Complex EA-18 "Growler" Airfield  
Operations Project

This letter acknowledges the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) received your request to reinstate Endangered Species Act (ESA) formal consultation on the subject action. Your request was dated August 20, 2019 and received on August 21, 2019. We anticipate concluding the reinstated consultation and issuing a new biological opinion and incidental take statement (ITS), as appropriate, within 135 days of our receipt of your request in accordance with 50 CFR 402.14(e). The Service anticipates providing our revised opinion on or about January 3, 2020, superseding and replacing the existing biological opinion and any ITS.

In the meantime, the existing biological opinion and ITS will remain in place. The existing opinion found the subject action to be compliant with the requirements of ESA section 7(a)(2)(i.e., the biological opinion concluded that the subject action was not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the marbled murrelet), and the ITS terms and conditions provide for continued monitoring of Growler flights, which is important for tracking incident stressors to marbled murrelets. During the period of reinstated consultation, the Service does not anticipate the Navy exceeding the level of exempted take provided in the existing ITS given the limited number of operations already conducted and those forecasted in the Navy's August 20, 2019, letter requesting reinstatement of consultation. Should this assessment change during consultation, we will advise you immediately.

This response to your request was prepared in accordance with the requirements of section 7(a)(2) of the ESA, the implementing regulations for section 7 at 50 CFR 402, and Fish and Wildlife Service policy and guidance. The Service appreciates the Navy's request to reinitiate consultation on the subject action, allowing us the opportunity to clarify the surrogate used for the ITS monitoring requirements within the Terms and Conditions, and refining our analysis to better align with the Navy's Record of Decision for the Final Environmental Impact Statement. Our point of contact for the reinitiated consultation is Katherine Fitzgerald ([katherine\\_fitgerald@fws.gov](mailto:katherine_fitgerald@fws.gov); 360-753-9593).

Sincerely,



Brad Thompson, Acting State Supervisor  
Washington Fish and Wildlife Office

cc:  
USFWS SOL Office, Portland OR (L. Grimm)