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## Local News

### Budgetary request names Washington County as OLF site

Follow-up impact statement to be released Friday

By NIKIE MAYO, News Editor

A \$10 million U.S. Department of Defense request identifies Washington County as the Navy's outlying landing field site before the release of the court-ordered Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement that examines the effects of choosing that spot.

Tagged "NOLF Washington County," the line item indicates \$10,060,000 would be used for outlying-landing-field facilities and land acquisition. The appropriation request is part of the Department of Defense's proposed budget for the coming federal fiscal year, which begins Oct. 1. The proposed budget was sent to Congress earlier this month.

"This removes any pretense that the Navy's supplemental environmental analysis will be the objective evaluation of alternative sites the law requires," said Derb Carter, an attorney with the Southern Environmental Law Center. The Chapel Hill-based firm represents environmental agencies and the counties opposing the planned OLF. The training area for military pilots would encompass 34,000 acres on the border of Beaufort and Washington counties.

"We now know the Navy's long-awaited study will be nothing more than an attempted justification for a decision already made," Carter said in a statement released by the law firm Tuesday.

The SEIS is scheduled to be released Friday, Navy spokesman Ted Brown wrote in an e-mail to the Daily News. It will be put in the Federal Register, which is a daily publication of federal notices and presidential documents.

In September 2005, a federal judge ruled that the Navy had violated the National Environmental Policy Act in reviewing the impacts of Navy-termed "Site C." The site is less than four miles from the Pungo unit of the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, which is home to thousands of waterfowl during the winter months. NEPA requires that federal agencies perform an objective evaluation of alternative sites that would have less impact on the environment, SELC attorneys said.

"It appears one more time that the Navy is not following the laws of the courts," Doris Morris, spokeswoman for North Carolinians



Opposed to the Outlying Landing Field, said Tuesday. "The Navy said it would look at other sites open-mindedly, and the fact that they're asking for money for Washington County before the draft SEIS comes out shows that they're not following proper procedure."

Calls by the Daily News to the Navy's after-hours line were not returned Tuesday evening.

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