



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
Office of the Governor

August 22, 2014

Colonel Robert C. Wittig  
Commander, U.S. Army Environmental Command  
2450 Connell Road, Building 2264  
Joint Base San Antonio – Fort Sam  
Houston, TX 78234-7664

RE: Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Assessment (SPEA) for Army 2020 Force Structure Realignment

Dear Colonel Wittig:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Assessment (SPEA) for Army Force Structure Realignment. This letter contains my response to the potential impacts of a force structure reduction of up to 16,000 permanent party soldiers and Army civilian employees.

I acknowledge that difficult reductions will have to be made within the Department of the Army and across the entire Department of Defense, especially as our nation winds down from prolonged military engagement overseas and that these reductions will affect nearly all military installations across the Army. The SPEA draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) to the environmental and socioeconomic conditions within the Region of Influence surrounding Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) necessitates comment:

1. The U.S. Army Environmental Command (USAEC) study used the Economic Impact Forecast System (EFIS) model to determine socioeconomic impact. This model uses national coefficients as its basis to calculate economic impacts. Your modeling predicts a cumulative loss of \$1.26 billion in Washington State Personal Income and \$17.4 million in tax revenue beginning in 2016 through 2020. The Washington State Office of Financial Management – Forecasting and Research department, in concert with the Office of Revenue Forecast Council has done similar research for the same time period using actual tax revenue data and variables calibrated to reflect Washington's economy. A more accurate economic impact beginning in 2016 through 2020 is a loss of \$2.44 billion dollars in Washington State Personal Income and a loss of \$87.26 million in tax revenues. These projections are significantly higher than the USAEC estimate and will have grievous effects to our economy.

2. A comprehensive transportation package to modernize Washington's infrastructure has been and will continue to be a top priority for my administration. Regional population growth in the nine Washington counties transited by I-5 has resulted in a 72 percent increase in interstate traffic. The portion of I-5 bisecting Joint Base Lewis-McChord was built in the 1950s and is no longer sufficient to meet the interstate and regional transportation demands of this strategic corridor. Available road capacity on I-5 near JBLM can support approximately 120,000 vehicles daily. The



daily traffic volumes along this section of interstate exceed 145,000 vehicles. Five infrastructure projects costing more than \$10 million are underway or have been recently completed to improve access to the Joint Base and better manage congestion along the I-5 corridor. State, county and local government with JBLM leadership are working toward strategic capacity improvements that will ensure JBLM remains the premier power projection platform on the West Coast. The Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) will complete a traffic simulation model in September that will quantify any benefits to traffic that might result from proposed force reductions at JBLM. Proposed force reductions at JBLM are estimated to have a negligible effect on traffic congestion outside very limited peak traffic periods. We look forward to sharing this data.

3. While it is understood that the Army would ensure adequate staffing remains to comply with mandatory environmental regulations, enduring partnerships focused on preserving or enhancing biological resources at JBLM will be placed at risk if proposed force reductions are realized. The South Puget Sound was once home to 150,000 acres of prairie. Today less than 25,000 acres remain with nearly 90 percent of that prairie located on JBLM. In concert with private partners, JBLM is involved in restoring and protecting wildlife habitat in military training areas and encouraging private partners in Thurston County to join the effort. Over 8,000 additional acres surrounding the base will be included in this program, reducing training restrictions on the installation and restoring a unique ecological asset. These efforts are so successful, the White House recently recognized JBLM as a leader in habitat restoration. Washington State is committed to implementing sound and effective policy that addresses climate change and JBLM is a valued partner in this effort.

4. In some regards, the value of our partnership with Joint Base Lewis-McChord is difficult to articulate. The Sustainability in Prisons Project, which partners The Evergreen State College, the Washington Department of Corrections, the Department of Fish and Wildlife and JBLM, has an effect far richer than just conservation and scientific research. This program engages inmates in carrying out ecological research and conservation projects that result in native habitat restoration. Each year, inmates participate in rearing Oregon spotted frogs and the Taylor's spotted butterfly and propagating more than 200,000 native plants for conservation programs at JBLM. Aside from the obvious environmental benefits, this program helps instill a sense of value, service and accomplishment to a very vulnerable segment of our society. Joint Base Lewis-McChord's vital partnership in this program has been part of achieving a positive prison culture resulting in \$4.3 million annual cost avoidance in state prisons, better employment opportunities for inmates upon release and reduced recidivism.

I appreciate your consideration of these comments and those from members of the Washington State and South Puget Sound community as a part of your Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Assessment (SPEA) for Army Force Structure Realignment, and its relation to JBLM. Our state is proud of and looks forward to continuing to host a robust Army presence. Washington is honored to support our military communities and the nation's defense.

Very truly yours,



Jay Inslee  
Governor