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Oregon

## Boardman turbines encroaching on Navy's airspace

By ANNA WILLARD, East Oregonian, [www.eastoregonian.com](http://www.eastoregonian.com) 17 February 2012

Wind turbine construction in one of the restricted airspace zones is threatening the Navy's ability to conduct low-altitude training exercises at the Boardman Bombing Range.

Officials with the U.S. Navy and Oregon National Guard spoke to the Umatilla Chemical Depot Local Reuse Authority on Thursday afternoon to address concerns regarding the use of airspace in the area of the depot for low-flying aircraft training purposes.

The restricted airspace area in question — R-5701 — is the only low-altitude electronic attack training in the Pacific Northwest, said Capt. Jay Johnston, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island commanding officer, during a presentation to the group Thursday.

"If they continue to build toward the center of our airspace, we risk losing our training ability," Johnston said.

The turbines go as high as 495 feet, while aircraft in the training exercises go as low as 200 feet, he said.

To remedy this problem, the Navy and Oregon National Guard are looking at extending the military operating area over the depot, which is currently a national security area. The airspace above the depot would not be restricted, Johnston said.

Prior to completing the change, an environmental impact statement must be written. Public comment will be accepted until Feb. 27.

"Areas like the Boardman Range are few and far between and virtually impossible to create," said John Mosher, U.S. Pacific Fleet Northwest Environmental Program Manager. "The range has great military use right now and into the future."

Umatilla County commissioner and Local Reuse Authority chairman Bill Hansell said the local authority is willing to work with the military.

"The top concern is that we have a plan in place and we don't want it to be in conflict with what the Navy is requiring," Hansell said.

Concerns regarding limitations on development with airspace changes came up. Mosher said the Navy would take those possibilities into consideration while drafting the environmental impact statement and evaluate mitigation options.

“We have to remember it isn't a constraint on our plans for development, but it is a consideration,” said Carl Scheeler, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation representative with the local reuse authority.

Terry Tallman, Morrow County judge, said the reuse authority believes in the military mission, but both sides need to come to an agreement.

“This is the future of the region we're talking about,” Tallman said. “We need the Navy and the Department of Defense to understand our interests and hear our concerns.”



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