

NCWF RESOLUTION 2009

OPPOSITION TO OLF AT SANDBANKS AND HALE'S LAKE

WHEREAS, The United States Navy (Navy) on January 22, 2008 released a new list of proposed sites for a possible Outlying Landing Field (OLF) to accommodate training for F18 Super Hornet Jets; and that this new list follows a retraction by the Navy of its previous preferred sites; and,

WHEREAS, this new list of five potential sites includes two in northeastern North Carolina, one being in Gates and Hertford counties referred to as the Sandbanks site and another in Camden and Currituck counties referred to as the Hale's Lake site; and,

WHEREAS, the latter site would impact wildlife populations and associated eco-tourism and resource-based recreation at the federally protected and managed Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge and the state protected and managed Merchants Millpond State Park and Dismal Swamp State Park where species include federally protected migratory birds such as snow geese and tundra swan, as well as, bald eagle, black bear, white-tailed deer and cottontail; and,

WHEREAS, this site is a highly flammable peat bog, whereby any crashes and or fuel dumpage could potentially ignite and cause devastating, long-lasting wildfires; and,

WHEREAS, the former site would also impact Merchants Millpond State Park and Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge as well as the Chowan River bottomlands and the Chowan Swamp Gamelands; and,

WHEREAS, the Chowan River bottomlands is distinguishably listed as an Important Bird Area vital for breeding and migrating neotropical birds including prothonotary and Swainson's warblers; the Chowan Swamp Gamelands, one of the most extensive swamp forest ecosystems in North Carolina comprising 10,996 tax-payer purchased acres, managed by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, that teem with black bear, bobcat, river otter, bald eagle and include federally endangered/threatened flora and fauna such as red-cockaded Woodpecker, Henslow's sparrow, Rafinesque's big-eared bat, American alligator, and southeastern myotis, grassleaf arrowhead, pondspice, raven's boxseed, and Virginia least trillium; and,

WHEREAS, the Chowan River, the cornerstone for the Chowan Gamelands and bottomlands, supplies most of the fresh water to the Albemarle Sound, which is part of the second largest estuary system in the U.S. (the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuary.) In 1979, the Chowan became the first river basin in NC to receive the "nutrient sensitive waters" classification. For the past two decades, concerned citizens and scientists have worked to restore water quality. The State's Natural Heritage Program considers 100 miles of the Chowan and its tributaries significant aquatic habitat because of diverse, rare and vulnerable populations of freshwater mussels. The Chowan is also a critical and vast commercial and recreational fishery; and,

WHEREAS, the proposed Sandbanks site would include 435 acres of the Chowan and 1,629 acres of its watershed wetlands thus the North Carolina Division of Water Quality has recommended it should not be pursued and, in fact, this site was de-listed from considerations previously in 2003 due to federally protected species and potential bird “flight safety” concerns; and,

WHEREAS, construction of an OLF at any site, including the Sandbanks and Hale’s Lake sites, will have immediate impacts on 30,000 acres yet additional impacts to wildlife and habitats extending much further due to contributing noise and air pollution factors; and,

WHEREAS, a constant naval operations of 32,000 cycles per year – day and night – will disrupt wildlife populations within the site contour and entire flight range; and,

WHEREAS, it is documented that F-18s use military fuel designated JP-8 that includes the flame retardant ethylene dipromide, an additive banned by the Environmental Protection Agency in 1993, and that in cases whereby Navy pilots dump fuel to reduce landing heights and speeds would, at these two North Carolina sites, degrade terrestrial and aquatic wildlife and habitat ; and,

WHEREAS, previous Navy proposed sites have cost taxpayers at least \$25 million dollars in the vetting process already and it is not clearly documented in full that the Navy even requires an OLF.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the North Carolina Wildlife Federation opposes the proposed OLF sites at Sandbanks and Hale’s Lake due to the negative and potentially irreversible wildlife and environmental damages they would cause; and that these two sites should be immediately removed from any further consideration now or at any time in the future.



Signed: _____

Date: February 28, 2009

CC:

Governor Bev Purdue

NC State Senator Marc Basnight, President Pro Tempore of the Senate

NC State Senator Ed Jones

NC State Representative Joe Hackney, Speaker of the House

NC State Representative Annie W. Mobley

NC State Representative Timothy L. Spear

NC State Representative Bill Owens,
Senator Richard Burr
Senator Kay Hagan
Congressman G.K. Butterfield
Congressman Walter Jones
Dee Freeman, Secretary of DENR
Wes Seegars, Chairman of the NCWRC
Gordon Myers, Executive Director of the NCWRC
Donald C. Winter, Secretary of the Navy