

Navy and Echo farm reach \$4.7 million easement agreement

June 17, 2019 4:44 pm



WHIDBEY ISLAND, Washington – The U.S. Navy, Trust for Public Land, and Northwest Rangeland have reached an agreement with Madison Ranches of Echo that will allow low-level test flights over 3,300 acres of farmland to continue without obstruction. In a prepared release, the Navy states that the restrictive-

use easement will benefit agricultural lands, preserve water rights, and protect military flight paths.

Madison Ranches is a fourth-generation family farm in Echo which is in close proximity to the Naval Weapons System Training Facility in Boardman. Under the easement, the Navy and its partners will pay Madison Ranches approximately \$4.7 million for more than 3,300 acres of land. Madison Ranches, in turn, agrees not to build structures in military flight paths. The Navy pointed out that the agreement also benefits the Oregon National Guard for its own low-level flight paths.

The agreement is the first in the region as a part of the Department of Defense's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program. REPI gives DOD organizations the ability to collaborate with local conservation organizations to purchase restrictive easements with landowners near military facilities. It is designed to remove or avoid land-use conflicts while promoting conservation.

"We would also like to offer our strong support of the program and it's continued funding," Madison Ranches President Jake Madison wrote to the Navy. "For the first time in four generations, Madison Ranches had the opportunity to secure ownership in a large community water development project. This project ensures water will continue to flow on Madison Ranch lands and will increase our irrigated acreage base and crop rotation. We have also been able to vertically integrate into an onion-packing shed. It's not a stretch at all to say that a lot of Navy personnel across the nation are going to be eating Madison Ranches grown onions that the REPI program helped make possible."

Madison also stated in that letter that the agreement will have a favorable impact on other local farms to continue to be generationally viable.