

Okaloosa County News Release

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Public Input meetings set for Military Sustainability

The 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) gave the Eglin Reservation two significant new missions: relocation of the 7th Special Forces Group from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and the new Joint Strike Fighter Integrated Training Center. **The military presence in our area now generates \$5.2 billion each year, providing 59,000 jobs, and \$4 billion in sales** according to the Haas Center at the University of West Florida. The military is vital to our local economy.

The Eglin Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) done after the 2005 BRAC announcement identified encroachment caused by military and civilian uses. The Joint Land Use Study recommended more study of certain areas. This includes properties in Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, and Walton Counties, and the cities of Crestview, Laurel Hill, DeFuniak Springs, and Freeport. The Department of Defense's Office of Economic Adjustment provided funding for the **Tri-County Small Area Studies** in April 2011.

The Small Area Studies planning process builds on the regional collaboration begun in the JLUS. The study includes noise, heights of structures, security, and things that affect pilot performance such as night light and glare. A series of public input meetings were held in April of this year to provide preliminary recommendations from the study as the issues emerged.

Public feedback from those meetings and continuing discussion with Eglin officials has resulted in significant changes to the recommendations provided in the April meetings. Three upcoming public meetings are set to give attendees an opportunity to hear these changes and provide input:

Santa Rosa County -- Tuesday, April 21, 2012 at 5:30 p.m., United Way of Santa Rosa Conference Room, 6479 Caroline Street, Milton, FL 32570

Okaloosa County -- Wednesday, August 22, 2012 at 5:00 p.m., Crestview Community Center, 1446 Commerce Drive, Crestview, FL 32539

Walton County -- Thursday, April 23, 2012 at 5:00 p.m., DeFuniak Springs Community Center, 361 N 10th Street, DeFuniak Springs, FL 32433

Please plan to attend the meeting in your county. The presentations will differ slightly for unique jurisdiction issues. Information to be discussed at the meeting is available for review now at www.smallareastudies.com.

For more information, please contact Ken Little, Military Sustainability Partnership Coordinator at (850) 609-3014, or e-mail at klittle@co.okaloosa.fl.us.