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April 24, 2008

Editor
Tidewater News
1000 Armory Drive
Franklin, VA 23851

Dear Editor:

In response to the April 20 article, “Admiral: OLF choice will get a rosy deal,” The Nature Conservancy would like to clarify its role and position in relation to the Navy’s proposed sites for an Outlying Landing Field (OLF).

Admiral Anderson’s comments may have conveyed the impression that The Nature Conservancy views an OLF at the Sandbanks site – or any of the other four proposed locations – as a positive conservation opportunity. That impression is inaccurate.

The Nature Conservancy is taking a hard look at the proposed sites to determine if an OLF would negatively affect natural resources in either North Carolina or Virginia. The North Carolina Chapter of The Nature Conservancy spoke with the Navy soon after the proposed OLF sites were announced to share some initial concerns regarding the Sandbanks site. That conversation in no way represents an endorsement of, or support for, any of the OLF sites.

The Nature Conservancy’s mission is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. Some of our conservation projects are near or adjacent to several of the now-proposed OLF sites. Given our large investment to protect those important natural areas, we will closely scrutinize the proposed sites to ensure that an OLF does not jeopardize our common natural heritage.

For over 50 years, The Nature Conservancy has worked to conserve important natural areas throughout the world. As a science-based organization, the Conservancy is looking to the EIS study to be conducted by the Navy as the best opportunity to gather relevant data and assess potential environmental impacts. The Nature Conservancy will be submitting comments to the Navy as part of the EIS scoping process to request that the environmental review address issues that are of concern to the Conservancy.

Sincerely,
Michael Lipford, Executive Director, The Nature Conservancy, Virginia
Katherine D. Skinner, Executive Director, The Nature Conservancy, North Carolina