

# Coalition Declares ‘Mission Accomplished’

## ELF Closure Puts Nukewatch in Spotlight

Calling the shut-down “a victory for anti-nuclear activists,” *Progressive* magazine editor Matt Rothschild said, “It was a huge victory for anti-nuclear activists in Wisconsin and around the country.” *The Progressive* was only one of several national news organizations that credited Nukewatch with a leading role in the campaign for the shutdown.

For 10 days state, national and international news organizations reported on the shutdown. The story got front-page coverage in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, the *Madison Capital Times*, the *Duluth News Tribune* and the *Ashland Daily Press*. Nationally, the news appeared in the *Detroit Free Press*, the *Boston Herald*, the *Washington Post*, the surprisingly nuclear-skeptical *USA Today* and on NPR’s *Morning Edition*. Around the world, the *London Guardian* and even the *Sydney Australian News* all noted the decades of anti-war protest and resistance. In federal policy-making circles, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Nov. 2 *Defense Environment Alert* (*InsideEPA.com*) and *The Bureau of National Affairs* (BNA), in Washington, D.C. — a letter published inside the beltway for federal agencies and the Congress — highlighted the shutdown. With the headline,

“Navy to Close Two Communications Sites After Years of Protests Against Sub System,” BNA noted, “A spokesman for Nukewatch, a Wisconsin nonprofit peace and environmental organization, told BNA Sept. 21 he thinks the Navy is shutting down the ELF sites due to fear of liability over potential health issues.”

*Morning Edition* introduced its interview with senior Nukewatch staffer Bonnie Urfer with, “For more than 20 years, a Navy nuclear submarine communications system buried in the northern woods of Wisconsin has been the scene of frequent anti-war demonstrations.”

The *Capital Times* editorially tipped its hat to us on Oct. 4, writing, “The Navy would have Wisconsinites believe that Project ELF is being shut down because it is no longer necessary, and perhaps there is something to that claim. But we suspect that continuing protests, by groups such as Nukewatch, hastened the decision.”

Newspapers around Wisconsin long ago called for ELF’s closure. The *Duluth News Tribune* said in 1993, “Being against Project ELF ... is getting so fashionable it’s starting to attract major league politicians.” In 1994, the *Wausau Daily Herald* demanded, “Pull the plug now on Navy’s

Project ELF.” Bigger dailies in Ashland, Eau Claire and Superior followed suit in 1995 and 1997. Wisconsin’s largest paper, the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, eventually reversed its earlier support for the system and declared in 1995 that, “ELF deserves to be quietly retired.”

If public opinion had been implemented then, the country would have saved between \$130 and \$160 million — and untold numbers of health and environmental problems. But as Senator Russ Feingold, D-Wisc., who since 1993 repeatedly introduced ELF shutdown legislation, told the *Associated Press*, “The Navy had a ‘bunker mentality’ in trying to pretend the facility had a purpose.” — **John LaForge**

### Celebrate Project ELF’s Shutdown

“Mission Accomplished”  
reunion and party

Mark your calendars for

Saturday, May 7, 2005

Time and place to be announced.



## Three Decades of Creative Nonviolence



Hundreds of people attended one of the first demonstrations at the Navy’s Project ELF site near Clam Lake, Wisc., in the spring of 1983.

*Editor’s note: Here are some highlights in the struggle against the submarine war trigger, Project ELF. We apologize for missing hundreds of events that space doesn’t allow us to mention. For a chronology of ELF actions between Nov. 17, 1991 and Aug. 8, 2004, contact Nukewatch.*

### 1968-69

Congress lets slip the Navy’s plan to build a giant “Sanguine” ELF system, burying 6,000 miles of cable under 40% of northern Wisconsin. Opposition by Wisconsinites is aided by U.S. Sen. William Proxmire.

The so-called Wisconsin Test Facility (WTF) is built at Clam Lake. According to the Navy, the purpose is to allow Trident subs to get messages while cruising deep. The Navy says it will remove the system after testing is complete.

### 1970-73

Opposition and controversy builds around the first-strike capability of the ELF/Trident system, environmental and health questions and threat to tourism.

### 1973

Grassroots resistance to WTF and Sanguine grows into the Stop Sanguine/ELF Committee in Mellen, Wisc., with Dr. Craig Kronstedt as Research Coordinator, and the Coalition Against Sanguine-ELF in Madison.

Navy tries to move Sanguine to Texas but is rebuffed by organized ranchers.

### 1975

Sanguine renamed “Seafarer” with a planned 2,500 miles of buried cable.

### 1976

In Michigan, eight local referenda all go against Seafarer, some by 4-to-1 margins. President Carter promises, “Seafarer would never be built in Michigan against the wishes of the Michigan people.”

### 1977

Michigan Governor Bill Millikan vetoes the installation of ELF predecessor Seafarer, writing to Defense Secretary

Harold Brown, “The people of Michigan do not want Seafarer, nor do I.”

### 1978

Admiral Hyman Rickover, the “father” of the nuclear Navy, says running submarines deeply is unnecessary. Writing in *National Defense*, Rickover says, “Despite the 1,500 sixty-day patrols that had been carried out by the 41 Polaris subs, the Soviet Union had not detected even one.” However, Congress grants the Navy \$15 million for the Wisconsin Test Facility.

The Navy changes the system’s name from Seafarer to “Project ELF” and proposes that transmitters be built in both Wisconsin and Michigan.

### 1979

President Carter orders Secretary of Defense Brown to terminate ELF’s predecessor Seafarer. The Government Accounting Office says \$115 million has been spent on ELF to date.

### 1980

Stop Project ELF is founded in Madison with Jenny Speicher and John Stauber as co-directors.

Researchers Klessig and Strite publish *The ELF Odyssey: National Security Versus Environmental Protection* (Westview Press), condemning the system on economic, political and ethical grounds.

### 1981

**April:** The Chief of Naval Operations testifies to Congress that, “No threat has emerged that causes us concern about our SSBN [nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine] force. And therefore it is not essential to press on with ELF at the present time.” Navy Secretary John Lehman recommends to the Pentagon that ELF be shelved.

Several hundred participate in the first of what would become scores of protests at the Clam Lake transmitter site as part of the national call to “freeze” the arms race.

### 1982

Voter referendum in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula finds 80-percent opposition to ELF construction. A 3-year series of monthly peace vigils begins at the Wisconsin site.

### Same Judge & Charge, Various Penalties

MADISON — Six anti-nuclear weapons activists were tried before Magistrate Stephen Crocker in federal court Nov. 5. They were found guilty of trespass but freed with no penalty after Crocker called the ELF struggle “over.”

The activists were arrested at ELF May 16, 2004. The federal district attorney, who offered a \$50 plea bargain but was turned down, went ahead with the prosecution in spite of the permanent shutdown of the ELF system on Sept. 30.

The defendants were attorney John Bachman of Eau Claire, Jan Karon and Penny Kragun, both of Duluth, Minn., Jane Hosking and Nukewatch staffer John LaForge, both of Luck, and Kelly Lundeen of Casa Maria in Milwaukee.

In a separate case Dec. 1, activist Michael Walli of Duluth appeared for re-sentencing before Crocker who gave him 21 days in jail which he began immediately. Walli was arrested in August 2002 and missed a March 2004 sentencing because he was doing time for an Army School of the Americas protest conviction. Mag. Crocker’s penalties have varied wildly, from \$50 fines to \$300, and from 4 days in jail to 60, for identical convictions.

Nukewatch staffer Bonnie Urfer and Michele Naar-Obed of Duluth may be the last ELF resisters to be tried. The two, along with nine others, were arrested in August 2004. The nine others have accepted the \$50 plea bargain, while Urfer and Naar-Obed will be arraigned Dec. 13.

### 1983

**April:** At the Michigan site, peace activists instigate a “de-surveying” campaign, removing survey markers and stakes from the ELF antenna area. Using media notices and publicity, the campaign — dubbed “stake-out” by activist Will Fantle — openly dismantles every bit of the survey. So widespread is public opposition to the ELF system that no arrests are ever made during this blatant defiance.

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