



Veterans march on Belfast for two-state peace walk

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By Ben Holbrook | Oct 12, 2015



Photo by: Ben Holbrook

Participants in Maine Walk for Peace gather outside The First Church in Belfast United Church of Christ the morning of Oct. 12 where they are briefed on the plan for the day.

BELFAST — Veterans and other participants descended upon Belfast Oct. 11 as part of a 175-mile peace walk along Route 1 from Ellsworth, Maine, to Portsmouth, N.H.

Organized by Maine Veterans for Peace, the purpose of the walk is to highlight the Pentagon's environmental impact on oceans and climate change, according to a press release from the organization.

The organization states that massive amounts of fossil fuels are consumed as a result of ongoing wars, which negatively impacts many environmentally vulnerable areas of the planet, especially the oceans. Because the oceans are home to many different organisms, Maine VFP says Navy sonar blasts can disrupt the lives of sea-dwelling creatures, leaving them more susceptible to disease and lowered reproductive success, as well as potentially injuring or killing them.

“If the seas die so do humans on earth and much of the wildlife,” Maine VFP Secretary Bruce Gagnon, who is also a coordinator for the walk, said in a statement. “Now is the time to speak out for ending the massive military impacts on the world’s oceans and for conversion of our fossil fuel dependent military industrial complex to sustainable technologies. We will walk to bring attention to these crucial issues.”

Participants in the walk are being hosted each night in local churches for community suppers where they will also hold public programs about the peace walk. The public is invited to walk for an hour, a day or longer.

After arriving in Belfast shortly before 6 p.m., participants gathered at The First Church in Belfast United Church of Christ for a pot luck supper and a public program. The group of nearly 20 walkers departed Belfast at 8:30 a.m. Oct. 12, as they made their way along High Street and Northport Avenue.

The walk, which kicked off Oct. 9 and ends Oct. 24, is led by monks and nuns from the Nipponzan Myohoji Buddhist order. This year’s walk marks the fourth of its kind held in the state in recent years.

Sponsors for the peace walk include Maine Veterans for Peace, PeaceWorks, CodePink Maine, Citizens Opposing Active Sonar Threats, Peace Action Maine, Veterans for Peace Smedley Butler Brigade, Seacoast Peace Response and Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space.



The group departs at about 9 a.m. and heads toward High Street before making their way out to Route 1 and heading to Camden. (Photo by: Ben Holbrook)



The two-state peace walk is organized to highlight the Pentagon's environmental impact on oceans and climate change. (Photo by: Ben Holbrook)



Participants carried signs and banners as they walked through Belfast Oct. 12. (Photo by: Ben Holbrook)