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JANE DEE HULL
GOVERNOR
STATE OF ARIZONA

August 16, 1999

Federal Aviation Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
400 Seventh Street SW, Room Plaza 401
Washington, DC 20590

FAA-99-5926-6

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my serious concerns with the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) proposed rulemaking regarding Limitations on Commercial Air Tours and Modifications of Flight Free Zones in Grand Canyon National Park. My reservations are based on the FAA proposal to limit the ability of certain visitors to see the beauty of the Grand Canyon, while ignoring the efforts to assist visitors and the environment through the development of quiet technology aircraft.

The existing rules governing overflights of the Grand Canyon have provided a clear benefit for the enjoyment of the Park by thousands of visitors who choose to travel into some of the more remote areas of the Canyon. The dramatic reduction in the number of complaints about the noise levels in the Park is ample evidence of the positive change achieved by the existing regulations.

At the same time, a different and unique experience exists for thousands of visitors who are only able to enjoy the Park through the air tours. In fact, less than five percent of park visitors are backcountry hikers, campers or river rafters; compared to the 800,000 visitors who annually view the Canyon by air.

For the senior citizens and members of the community with disabilities, a true enjoyment of the full expanse of the Grand Canyon is only accessible by the means offered by air tour operators. According to a survey by the National Park Service (NPS), nearly half of the air tour passengers report that health limitations are an important reason for taking an air tour of the Grand Canyon. It would be a tragedy for the FAA to deny these visitors to my state their only reasonable access to the Canyon, in order to achieve barely discernible benefits for a different, smaller group of Park users.

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It is my understanding that the FAA is using an abnormal, low operation year as a baseline in establishing the allocations for air tours. This has the potential to reduce the number of flights, and the accompanying access for Canyon visitors, for tour operators by ten to seventy percent. Thus, based on Park Service predictions, the number of visitors to the Canyon will continue to grow but the opportunity for those who rely on air tours to enjoy the Park will be limited.

Most important, I share the view of members of our Congressional delegation who consider the FAA and NPS to have failed in their obligation to provide incentives for quiet technology aircraft. It is my strong belief that the government should provide expanded opportunity and access for all citizens. In this proposed rulemaking, however, the FAA is proposing to limit access rather than pursuing a common sense approach to expand access through improved technology.

Before proceeding with further limitations on the air tours that provide many citizens with their only access to the wonders of the Grand Canyon, the FAA and NPS should act aggressively to provide the incentives for quiet technology, as Congress first urged as far back as 1987. I strongly support the view expressed by Senator McCain, who sponsored the original act, that reasonable air tour access can be protected -- along with the preservation of natural quiet -- if the responsible federal agencies diligently pursue technological incentives.

Again, I have serious reservations about this proposed rulemaking because it limits the access for a large group of people to the wonder of the Grand Canyon through the air, with little or no accompanying benefit for an extremely small portion of the overall Park visitor population. Likewise, rather than addressing the original intent of noise limitation legislation, the proposed rules completely neglect the obligation to offer incentives for quiet air tour technology which could protect both access and natural quiet.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jane Dee Hull".

JANE DEE HULL
Governor