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400 Seventh Street SW.,
Room Plaza 401, Washington , DC 20590

[Docket No. FAA-99-5926; Notice No. 99-1 1]
RIN 2120-AG74

Federal Aviation Administration

August 24, 1999

Subject: Comments on "Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM):
Modification of the Dimensions of the Grand Canyon National Park
Special Flight Rules Area and Flight Free Zones; Proposed Rule

During the early part of the 1980's sightseeing flights became popular over the Grand Canyon National Park. As the number of flights increased, two adverse effects became obvious; the risk of midair collisions increased and aircraft noise became objectionable. The FAA issued Special Federal Aviation Regulation (SFAR) No. 50 establishing special flight rules area and other flight regulations in the vicinity of the GCNP. This was modified several times and on December 31, 1996 the FAA published the final rule amending Part 93 of the Federal Aviation Regulations by adding a new Subpart to codify the provisions of Special Federal Aviation Regulation (SFAR) No. 50-2. Special Flight Rules in the Vicinity of the GCNP...etc. (61 FR 69302). Several additional FAA actions delayed the implementation of further expansion of FFZs, the air tour routes and other related airspace provisions until January 31, 2000.

The existing rules substantially reduced the mid-air collision hazard and for all practical purposes eliminated the noise complaints. The "Report to Congress on Effects of Overflights on Visitor Enjoyment" published by the National Park Service in 1994, said in paragraph 6.5 that only 2 to 3 percent of all visitors report having their enjoyment interfered with, being annoyed, or having their appreciation of natural quiet interfered with by the sound of aircraft. Regrettably, this survey did not even include the nearly nine-hundred thousand visitors using aircraft!

However, these regulation created a very complex regulatory maze and practically eradicated general aviation from a one-hundred and forty mile long and ten to forty mile wide area of the U.S. Traveling by a normally aspirated engine equipped average general aviation airplane over the SFAR 50-2 area is nearly impossible because those airplanes cannot climb above the 14,500 feet MSL ceiling of the SFAR. The person who wants to fly from Sedona, Arizona to Salt Lake City, Utah must plan a detour around the GCNP.

Even the SFAR 50-2 currently in effect is more restrictive, than required in the interest of aviation safety and maintaining the GCNP's assets. One of those assets is the opportunity for visitors to see this park from the air. Nearly a million people every year vote in favor of that option with their money. The elderly, the handicapped, people with limited time and the physically unfit deserve the opportunity to see this magnificent site from the air. If we recognize the facts, that the commercial airtours do not damage the trails, throw no trash around and create noise only for a very short time, than that looks like the most environmentally proper form of visitation of the GCNP. Natural quiet is an instantaneously renewable resource - and nobody has to pay for it!

The opportunities for technical improvements - and there are many - cannot be pursued with the present policy of continuously stricter regulations. No tour operators are willing to risk investing scarce resources into a quiet, state of the art sightseeing tour airplane, when the sword of Damocles in the form of more draconian regulations hangs continuously over their head. As a consequence of this head-in-the sand regulatory philosophy most of the airplanes currently flying as touring airplanes are unfit for aerial touring. The so called noise-efficient/ quiet technology airplane corridor is a cruel hoax, because nobody ever defined the criteria of it! How can any responsible airplane designer even consider the challenge to design a compliant airplane, when no definition of the acceptable aircraft noise level exists?

The proposed expansion of the Grand Canyon SFRA and the FFZs will not create appreciable improvement in the safety and enjoyment of the Grand Canyon National Park. The Governor of the State of Arizona and the Arizona State Senate oppose these proposed rules.

This commenter opposes the introduction of the proposed rules and requests the FAA to retain the currently existing regulations .

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elemer A. Katinszky', written in a cursive style.

Elemer A. Katinszky

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