

I am writing as a concerned citizen to comment on the draft rule to implement the National Parks Air Tour Management Act. I want to offer support for the 5000' AGL altitude recommended by FAA as the triggering altitude for the air tour management planning process. Members of National Parks Overflight Working Group, including an NPCA representative, unanimously recommend this altitude. The 5000' AGL will capture most operators that offer commercial air tours of parks. Moreover, the 5000' level in no way interferes with general aviation traffic since only flight operators who meet the rest of the Act's definitions are defined as commercial air tour operators. In the air tour management planning process, the FAA should recognize the National Park Service's expertise on natural quiet issues and defer to the Park Service's authority to determine the impacts of noise on park visitors, resources, and value. The FAA should begin immediate enforcement of the "no new entrants" clause of the Act to prevent new air tour operators from flying over parks before the air tour management planning process starts. The FAA should prohibit existing air tour operators from flying over our national parks if they ignored the FAA advisory requesting air tour operators over national parks to notify the FAA of their over-park operations within 90 days of the passage of the National Parks Air Tour Management Act in April 2000. The FAA should clearly define for the public and the air tour operators the process through which air tour management plans will be developed. I agree with the sentiment expressed the Grand Canyon Trust that the our National Park crown-jewels, such as the Grand Canyon, Zion National Park, and others on the Colorado Plateau, were established on the basis of giving visitors the opportunity to experience these still wild and remote places in a natural state, a condition that includes "natural quiet." There are fewer and fewer such wild and remote places in the world and we need to do everything we can to come up with a process to manage the impact that commercial tour operators have on the ones that remain. Thank you for the opportunity to express my comments on this issue.