

Montana Wilderness Association  
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Docket Number FAA-2001-8690

Docket Management System  
US Dept. of Transportation Room PL401  
400 Seventh Street SW  
Washington, DC

June 8, 2001

Dear FAA:

The following comments on Proposed Rules relating to National Park Air Tour Management are made on behalf of the Montana Wilderness Association (MWA), a 4,000 member, state-wide conservation organization with a 69 year history of involvement in Glacier National Park.

We have read and reviewed the Proposed Rules (Docket # FAA-2001-8690) and commend the your agency for producing rules that may lead to the restoration of historic quiet conditions to the skies of our national parks, and Glacier National Park in particular. Glacier has experienced growth in the Air Tourism over the years and the Montana Wilderness Association is on record in support of restoring the natural quiet over Glacier. The vast majority of Glacier is a wilderness park, and, as such, commercial air tour operations are inappropriate where primitive means are the norm. Air tour operations disrupt the natural quiet, spoil the wilderness experience, can be disturbing to wildlife, and greatly diminish the natural aesthetic of the national park experience.

The Proposed Rule establishes the altitude (5,000' Above Ground Level (AGL)) that completes the definition of commercial air tour operations. MWA supports this altitude if AGL is determined by the highest (and not lowest) point in the national park. The proposed rule does not appear to specify this criterion.

MWA notes that the restoration or preservation of "natural quiet" is a criteria for compliance with the Air Tour Management Act of 2000 and the Proposed Rule. In questions regarding "natural quiet", we request that the National Park Service be the determining authority on this aesthetic.

MWA requests that the "no new entrants" provision of the Act are immediately enforced so as to prevent yet further deterioration of natural parks' airspace and wilderness character.

In regard to the last comment, MWA additionally asks that the FAA block any existing air tour operators from flying over parks if they ignored the FAA Advisory requiring 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.

Finally, MWA requests a clear statement of the public process to be used in the development of Air Tour Management Plans.

The Montana Wilderness Association appreciated this opportunity to comment on the Proposed Rule. We look forward to working with the FAA, NPS and Glacier

National Park in developing an Air Tour Management plan that protects the cultural, historic and wilderness characteristics of Glacier.

Sincerely,

Dave Hadden, Coordinator  
Transboundary Organizing Project  
Montana Wilderness Association

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