

Status of GCNP Recommendations in the 1994 Report to Congress*

(Update of previous version)

This effort represents a general summary of the recommendations contained in the 1994 report to Congress and the best recollection of the authors as to the historical reason(s) why certain recommendations were not instituted.

In presenting these views, it should be understood:

- 1) That this document does not constitute a formal position with regard to any particular recommendation.
- 2) That this document is intended to provide a general historical reference only, and is in no way intended to encourage nor discourage any particular thought or idea from consideration.
- 3) The working group retains complete freedom and latitude to consider this information any way it chooses.

In Chapter 9 of the 1994 Report, NPS concluded that natural quiet in GCNP had not been substantially restored and recommended SFAR 50-2 be revised to effect and maintain the substantial restoration.

In Chapter 10, NPS specifically recommended:

Airspace Structure

General

1.
 - The SFRA boundary be modified near the southeast corner of the Bright Angel Flight-Free Zone and the far western edge of the SFRA near the Grand Wash Cliffs to ensure almost all of GCNP lies within the SFRA. **Implemented**
 - The FAA may have to modify the boundary elsewhere to guarantee that all commercial aircraft remain within the SFRA while conducting tours. **Not Implemented**^[PJ1]
 - The NPS also recommends that the SFRA boundary be realigned as originally proposed by NPS in 1987 near the Grand Canyon West Airport and that traffic utilizing this airport have the same caveat (“Landing/Take-off operations below 3,000’ AGL within 3 NM of the airport are authorized by the SFAR”) as other airports located under or adjacent to the SFRA. **Not Implemented. Contained in '96 Final Rule. FAA established that the present airspace structure around the GCN airport provides the minimum safety margins acceptable to the FAA.**^[PJ2]



* This document reflects the general implementation status of the '94 recommendations. Many of the responses, including “implemented” and “partially implemented” have important qualifications which are beyond the scope of this summary



2. FAA study the air traffic in the range of 14,499 feet Mean Sea Level (MSL) to 17,999 MSL so that a determination can be made as to whether there is merit in an upward adjustment of the SFRA ceiling. **Implemented**
3. “Minimum Altitude Sector” boundaries (for the five sectors within the GCNP SFRA) remain unchanged. The minimum altitudes within these boundaries are proposed to remain unchanged for general aviation aircraft, but will change for air tour aircraft as specified under “Routes” below. **Implemented, although two sectors were merged. Part 93 changed minimum altitudes.**
4. A new regulation superseding SFAR 50-2 should be considered a permanent Federal Aviation Regulation without an expiration date. **Implemented**

Flight-Free Zones

5. Flight-free zones be expanded, in some cases beyond the boundary of GCNP:
 - Bright Angel and Shinumo FFZs be combined and increased in area to the north (to the SFRA boundary); **Not Implemented – alternative implemented**^[PJ3]
 - Desert View FFZ be expanded to the north and south (and to the east to the SFRA boundary); **Not Implemented**^[PJ4]
 - Toroweap/Thunder River FFZ be expanded to the west and south (and to the north to the SFRA boundary). **Toroweap/Shinumo created/Partially implemented**
 - A new FFZ, the Sanup FFZ, be created in western Grand Canyon. **Implemented**
6. The resulting four FFZs be identified as follows (from east to west): Desert View, Bright Angel, Toroweap/Thunder River, and Sanup. These four zones would encompass approximately 987,200 acres or almost 82 percent of the total park area. **Partial**^[PJ5]
implemented
7. FAA study air traffic over the FFZs in the range of 14,499 MSL to 17,999 MSL to evaluate the merit of raising the FFZ ceilings. **Not Implemented. 8,000 MSL to 14,500 MSL is the range of ceilings.**^[PJ5]

Flight Corridors

8. Dragon Flight Corridor. On the effective date of a new regulation superseding SFAR 50-2, the Dragon Flight Corridor would be abolished. Black 1 Alpha (airplane) and Green 1 Alpha (helicopter) one-way only commercial tour routes (as designated in SFAR 50-2) would remain accessible for use by quiet commercial aircraft only. Five years after the effective date of the new regulation, these routes would be eliminated. **Not Implemented**^[PJ6]
9. Fossil Canyon Flight Corridor.
 - Five years after the effective date of a new regulation superseding SFAR 50-2, the commercial tour routes within the Fossil Canyon Flight Corridor would be accessible only to quiet commercial aircraft. **Not Implemented**^[PJ7]
 - Effective immediately upon implementation of the new regulation, the dimensions of the corridor would be changed to conform with the structure of the Zuni Point Flight Corridor (2 NM wide for commercial tour and 4 NM wide for general aviation). The

general aviation portion of the corridor would be centered directly over the commercial tour portion. **Implemented. Commercial tour portion eliminated.**

- Two-way traffic within the Fossil Canyon Flight Corridor by commercial tour aircraft would be prohibited. **Commercial tours eliminated**
- Two-way traffic by general aviation would be permitted. **Implemented**

10. Zuni Point Flight Corridor.

- Ten years after the effective date of a new regulation superseding SFAR 50-2, the commercial air tour routes within the Zuni Point Flight Corridor would be accessible only to quiet commercial aircraft. **Not Implemented**^[PJ8]
- Two-way traffic within the Zuni Point Flight Corridor by commercial tour aircraft would be prohibited. **Not implemented**^[PJ9]
- Two-way traffic by general aviation would be permitted. **Implemented**

11. Tuckup Flight Corridor.

- Continue to be accessible only to general aviation aircraft. **Implemented**
- Minimum altitude would be lowered from 10,500 feet MSL to 9,500 feet MSL. **Not Implemented**^[PJ10]
- Two-way traffic by general aviation would be permitted. **Implemented**

GCNP SFRA

12. Fifteen years after the effective date of the new regulation superseding SFAR 50-2, commercial tour routes within the GCNP SFRA would be accessible only to quiet commercial aircraft. Non-quiet commercial tour aircraft (including NPS aircraft) would have their access phased out. Access by general aviation and military aircraft would continue unless results from acoustic monitoring programs indicate a need for change. **Not Implemented**^[PJ11]

Routes

13. Routes and route segments available to the Grand Canyon air tour industry under SFAR 50-2 be simplified and reduced. **Implemented. Additional modifications in these recommendations also identified.**
14. One-way traffic on commercial air tour routes outside of flight corridors be instituted as much as possible. Two-way traffic within flight corridors by commercial air tour aircraft would be prohibited. **partially implemented**
15. Whitmore Canyon/Wash helicopter routes be treated the same as all other commercial air tour routes within the GCNP SFRA (i.e., numbered, described, etc.), and procedures be identified in the FAA's and operator's Operations Specifications manuals. Noise abatement procedures would be instituted by the FAA after consultations with NPS. **Not implemented.** ^[PJ12]
16. Quiet aircraft would be allowed to fly at lower altitudes than non-quiet aircraft where feasible. That is, where the option exists, only quiet aircraft would be allowed to fly at the minimum altitudes specified for tour aircraft in SFAR 50-2. This may require FAA to adjust commercial air tour route altitudes specified for non-tour aircraft upward to meet necessary separation standards. This recommendation can be phased in over a short period of time (not to exceed 2 years) or instituted immediately if there are sufficient quiet aircraft already in service. **Not Implemented**^[PJ13]

17. Tour flight route altitudes be adjusted to prohibit flight below the elevation of any canyon rim or feature within one mile (horizontally) of the route. **Substantially Implemented**

Aircraft Equipment Recommendations

18. FAA and NPS work cooperatively to develop a noise-based definition of “quiet aircraft” and identify the list of fixed-wing and rotorcraft (current technology) that would qualify for use in the Special Flight Rules Area. The definition should also be such that retrofitted aircraft are able to be added to the “quiet aircraft” category. **Implemented**
19. The development and implementation of incentives related to quiet aircraft be an important component of any proposed changes to the SFAR. **Not implemented, but proposed.**[PJ14]

Aircraft Operations Recommendations

20. FAA and NPS work together to develop a process that would be initiated when “action triggers” are met as determined through the NPS acoustic monitoring program. This action must be complete within six months of meeting or exceeding trigger. Limits on operation or noise, particularly in flight corridors, would be among the measures considered. The FAA would then develop an appropriate mechanism (noise budget, co-permitting, [redacted] other) that would implement this limitation after it has been triggered. **Not implemented**[PJ15]
21. A temporal restriction (a curfew or “no-fly” time period) for commercial air tour aircraft be implemented on the effective date of a new regulation superseding SFAR 50-2. NPS recommends a “no fly” time from 6pm – 8am each day. **Implemented for the east end: Summer 6p-8a; Winter 5p-9a**
22. APIMS (Aircraft Position Information Monitoring System”) or similar tracking system be required on Part 135 tour aircraft operating in the SFRA for the purpose of tracking compliance, numbers of flights per route by time period, and so forth, to develop a data base which m [redacted] be used to develop more effective noise abatement techniques. **Not Implemented – reporting requirements implemented instead.**

Flights Outside the SFRA

23. Due to the frequent deviations of high altitude jets from normal routes for sight-seeing purposes, it is recommended that FAA not authorize any deviations from normal flight plans and cruising altitudes for aircraft on high altitude jet routes over the Grand Canyon area for any reasons other than safety. An FAA study is recommended on high-altitude jet routes that may also have impacts on natural quiet in the park. **On-going**

Miscellaneous Recommendations

24. In those instances where the FAA allows commercial tour aircraft to land and take off on lands adjacent to GCNP, the NPS recommends the FAA require those aircraft to be at the minimum sector altitude prior to crossing over park lands. **Not Implemented. Generally, aviation operating during critical phases of flight (landing or take off) will always be exempt from adjacent restrictions for safety reasons.**[PJ16]
25. The FAA, in consultation with the NPS, should revise the “Grand Canyon Visual Flight Rules (VFR) Aeronautical Chart” (1st Edition, April 4, 1991) at the appropriate time to

reflect any changes to the SFRA resulting from the previously described recommendations. **Implemented. Should occur on a regular cycle basis.**

26. The NPS shall establish an interpretive message, exhibit, or display in key locations of the park to describe overflights to visitors, and to tell them where they can expect natural quiet and where they can expect to hear aircraft. **Partially Implemented.**^[PJ17]
27. In recognition of a need for continued cooperation between both the FAA and NPS, a formal process (e.g., a MOU) will need to be established for accommodating requests from air tour operators for route changes or other matters of interest. **Partially Implemented; Procedures in GCNP SFRA Procedures Manual; On-going development of process to address 7711 waiver requests.**
28. Acknowledging a continuing need for communication between all interested parties, NPS and FAA should be amenable to holding public meetings as needed. **Ongoing**

