

**Grand Canyon Working Group
Tenth Meeting
September 20, 2007
Chaparral Suites
Scottsdale, Arizona**

Final Summary of Discussion and Agreements Reached

Facilitators/recorders: Lucy Moore, Ed Moreno, Tahnee Robertson

Members Present:

Lynne Pickard, FAA, Working Group Co-chair
Steve Martin, Superintendent, Grand Canyon National Park, Working Group Co-chair
Katherine Andrus, Air Transport Association
Bill Austin, US Fish and Wildlife Service
Timothy Begay, Navajo Nation
Roger Clark, Grand Canyon Trust
Sherry Counts, Hualapai Tribe
Roxane George, Sierra Club [Day One]
Mark Grisham, Grand Canyon River Outfitters Association
Elling Halvorson, Papillon Airways
Leigh Kuwanwisiwma, Hopi Tribe
Craig Sanderson, alternate for Cliff Langness, King Airlines, Inc. and Westwind Aviation
Doug Nering, Grand Canyon Hikers & Backpackers Assoc.
David Nimkin, National Parks and Conservation Association
Alan Stephen, Scenic and Grand Canyon Airlines, Inc.
Rob Smith, alternate for Roxane George [Day Two]
John Sullivan, Sundance Helicopters, Inc.
Edmund Tilousi, Havasupai Tribe
Heidi Williams, Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association
David Yeamans, Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association

NPS, Natural Sounds Program chair:

Karen Trevino, NPS, Natural Sounds Program

Member/Alternate Absent:

Bob Henderson, alternate for Alan Zusman, Naval Facilities Engineering Command

Summary of Agreements:

[Consensus and Agreements on Strawman elements are in separate document]

Consensus:

- *Approval of summary of June 2007 meeting, as corrected*

Welcome and Introductions: Lucy welcomed the GCWG members, alternates, staff and observers. She explained that the previous day, September 19, GCWG members had discussed and sought consensus on the Strawman elements relating to route changes. The format for that discussion was a study session, to allow maximum openness and exploration of options. This second day was scheduled to be a regular GCWG meeting, open to the public. She asked members if they favored returning to a study session format, or continuing their Strawman discussion in open session. Members chose to allow the meeting to remain open, as noticed. Elling Halvorson and his team of *sous chefs* received a hearty round of applause in appreciation of their hospitality the evening before.

GCWG members introduced themselves, as did those in the audience.

The group reviewed the agenda, and chose to postpone approval of the June 2007 meeting summary to the end of the day.

Film: The previous morning, Steve Martin had shown the Today Show video on the Grand Canyon, aired recently. Elling Halvorson asked to show a video on the second morning that described the history of air tours at the Canyon.

Remarks of the Co-Chairs: Steve Martin repeated his hopes for this session: that the GCWG would reach agreement on the key elements of a preferred alternative. As was the case the day before, there may be questions that remain about some of the proposed changes. He committed to making answers to these questions the top priority for his staff in order to move the process along as quickly as possible. He and his staff looked forward to constructive input from members, exploration of solutions, and additional "give and take" as his staff develop the preferred alternative. The Strawman, he said, was proving to be a good starting place for these discussions.

Steve identified key elements he and his staff will be looking for in the preferred alternative. A preferred alternative should:

- Meet 50% or more, 75-100% of the park standard (as tested by approved modeling)
- Provide significant improvement over the status quo for certain critical areas, through seasonal shifts or other mechanisms
- Provide a reasonable opportunity for business profit (recognition of important role of the air-tour visitor during closures and need for additional options/routes)
- Should reflect the agreement, support and trust within the GCWG and between the group and the agencies
- Be designed to insure safe operations
- Include other elements that benefit park resources, visitors and wildlife

Steve Martin informed the group that the draft definition of substantial restoration is currently being reviewed at the Justice Department. He anticipates publication in the Federal Register in the next 45 days. Although public comment is not required, because

the language relates to policy not rule, a member reminded Steve that at the previous GCWG meeting he had agreed to have a comment period following the publication. Steve agreed to pursue the possibility of a comment period.

Lynne Pickard told the group that FAA reauthorization was set for the House floor today, but she had no idea of its potential for success. She added that the new authorization is critical to fund new technologies, navigational systems and programs for the next generation of air traffic control systems. These are the advances that Dan Elwell identified in his letter to DOI reflecting FAA's commitment to address high altitude noise issues. She regrets that delays in reauthorization will create delays in these advances. The house bill contains nothing on the Grand Canyon, she said, adding that her office stressed to House staff that any legislation on Grand Canyon would be counterproductive at this time.

Status of Modeling Runs: Cyndy Lee, Volpe, updated the group on modeling. This report is available on the website: overflights.faa.gov

Discussion: Cyndy explained that different noise metrics give different pictures. The ability to evaluate the noise above a certain level may help identify the level of noise that could interfere with a ranger talk, and that may be an indicator of a problem. She added that her analysis includes 127 points, including 39 noise sensitive points that relate to key resource areas of interest. These 39 points were selected by NPS for more detailed analyses. The detailed analyses can provide a larger scope of data for select location points on the individual noise contributions of each aircraft and flight segment.

The Volpe presentation included a section of data on how QT aircraft load-efficiency could improve time-audible contours on modeling of the Peak Day. A recreation member questioned whether load-efficiency was a valid tool for Grand Canyon since allocations are managed by total flights rather than by number of seats on aircraft.

A member asked where the time audible contours for GA flights begin and end. Cyndy responded that the modeling begin before entering and after exiting the corridors. The GA member requested that the GA information in the presentation not be posted on the website. There was discussion about the credibility of the forecast scenario. If the current air tour growth rate is applied in the model to the peak day, won't operators hit their maximum allocations soon? Not so, since allocation apply to annual operations and not daily operations. The socio-economic consultant has provided specific information he received from operators regarding expected industry growth. This would be combined with the growth rate estimated by the FAA by querying their Terminal Area Forecast (TAF) system for the three primary airports serving GCNP [Grand Canyon (GCN), North Las Vegas (VGT), and Henderson (HND)].

Resumption of Strawman discussion: Lucy reviewed the points raised and consensus results from the previous day, noting that there was strong support for all of the items, although some did not have consensus, and some need further study and refinement for

members to consider them beyond mere concepts. She said there would be another chance for the GCWG to look at the "whole picture" after the Park Service drafts a preferred alternative. Steve agreed with an air tour operator who suggested that a small group could move the route change proposals forward. He added that he planned to work with his staff to consolidate the Strawman elements into a rough draft preferred alternative for review again by the group at their next meeting.

NEPA Update: Grace Ellis (NPS) and Paul Joly (FAA) gave a power point presentation on the NEPA process to date. This presentation is on the website: overflights.faa.gov

Data is organized in three categories: all aircraft above 18,000, all aircraft below 18,000 but outside the SFRA, and all aircraft below 18,000 feet within the SFRA. NPS and FAA staff hold weekly conference calls with Denver Service Center and Parsons. Tribal consultations are ongoing, including meetings with Navajo in Window Rock, Hualapai Tribal Council, and the Hopi representative in Flagstaff. Those concerns have been incorporated into the NEPA alternatives. NEPA team members plan to meet soon with Havasupai leadership to discuss the Fossil Corridor in particular.

Consultants have compiled results of the interviews with operators, and prepared an initial analysis of economic and social impacts. The team is also working on finalizing a method to evaluate impacts on GA. A literature review is underway on methodologies for evaluating impacts to the visitor experience. The summary of the literature review will be included in the DEIS. NPS is also working on thresholds.

The schedule has slipped two months; the impact analysis will begin in December. The team anticipates a February GCWG meeting to review the outline of the analysis results, and a draft EIS for public comment in September.

Outstanding tasks include

- forecast modeling for all alternatives
- the application of quantitative threshold intensities for impact topics
- finalizing the definition of substantial restoration of natural quiet
- development of the preferred alternative

Discussion: A member expressed concern about the potential for "creep" in the development of thresholds, and asked if the term implied anecdotal rather than hard science. His assumption was that the listening area metric was "off the table" for Grand Canyon. Grace agreed that in this process a listening area metric is not being used. She explained that the terms: threshold, metrics and parameters can be very confusing in the NEPA context. Here, threshold refers to a broad, generic characteristic, for example "poverty." The metric would be how poverty is measured, i.e., in euros, dollars, etc. And the parameter would refer to where you stand with respect to the threshold, i.e., above or below the poverty line. The analysis will evaluate and test the appropriate metrics and parameters for each impact topic, and will also determine the need for outside technical expertise to help understand what is a reasonable inference for each parameter.

Final Summary – approved with corrections following the December 2007 meeting

An environmental member asked what decibel levels are being used, and questioned how recommended values could be translated from one setting to another, for instance from a level appropriate indoors to a comparable level outdoors.

At the end of the discussion session, the representative from the NPS Natural Sounds Program noted that each of the strawman proposals should also be tested to see how much noise reduction actually results before any final decisions are reached by the group.

Lynne appreciated the work of the technical team, which has been working on identifying scientifically defensible methodology for aircraft noise analysis. They have been doing due diligence, she said, to find ways to support conclusions about what kinds of metrics to use for what kinds of impacts.

June Meeting Summary Approval: Members noted corrections to the draft meeting summary, and approved it as corrected.

- P. 14, Alan Stephen requested that language be included which notes access for people with disabilities to air tours
- Heidi Williams clarified that GA is already regulated, and that there must be more evaluation before there is any more regulation.
- A member clarified that NPS agreed to provide a comment period following the publication of the definition of substantial restoration in the Federal Register.
- P. 13, Rob Smith submitted a re-write of comments made by Dennis Hughes during the public comment period.
- P. 10, Karen Trevino offered to provide language to clarify that the metric in question is not "new."
- National Parks Conservation Association, not National Parks and Conservation Association

Consensus on meeting summary

Observer Comments:

Jim McCarthy, Plateau Group of the Sierra Club: Jim asked the group to look more carefully at the issue of quiet technology and the Federal Register notice that defined the term. QT aircraft, he said, according to the FAA definition could make more noise on every single flight than they now make. He offered to explain this to anyone interested.

Dick Hingson, National Parks Conservation Association, alternate: Dick referred to the Quiet Canyon Coalition proposal reflected in Alternative E. He suggested that modeling of this third week in September, right after the Dragon's proposed seasonal re-opening (September 15), would be critical. Nearer the threshold of audibility, where there are values, needs, expectations for absolute silence to experience to protect, it is necessary have an adequate margin of safety, he said. He referred the group to recent papers on the subject, "Queing for Natural Quiet," by Richard D. Horonjeff, HMMH, which deals with the waiting period for a noise-free interval of a given length. This, he believes, should be an aspect of the impact assessment for the EIS. For supplemental metrics, he urged using NA 35 and TA 35, both for number and time above. The natural ambient is often 20, or

even 15, he added, “so we’re talking about persistent, frequent surges of 15 -20 above natural ambient.” Excessive time and frequent numbers above 35, will destroy peace, natural stillness, and the Canyon’s sense of immeasurable serenity and vastness, he said. Dick referred to another publication, “Protecting Natural Soundscapes with an Adequate Margin of Safety,” by Richard D. Horonjeff and Grant S. Anderson, presented at June 2007 biennial conference of the Acoustical Society of America.

Greg Rochna, Maverick Helicopter: Mr. Rochna wanted the group to know that his company has the largest fleet of EC 130s, and that they are full 60% of the time. Filling the seats can necessitate a fuel stop half way between Las Vegas and Grand Canyon. As it is, he is just breaking even. He told the group he believes the 2010 deadline for quiet technology is unrealistic. Deliveries of helicopters are way behind schedule. The aircraft he is receiving now were ordered in 2003, and those that he is ordering now are scheduled for delivery in 2010. He added that he has to expect 25% down time on the aircraft, because of parts problems. Incentives will be critical in enabling operators to meet a quiet technology deadline and survive economically. Finally, he said he appreciated the hard work of the agencies and the GCWG.

Arv Schultz, Arizona Pilots Association: Concerning the flight following issue, Mr. Schultz noted that all aircraft that are operating out of class Bravo have to be equipped with transponders. He believed that to cut costs other tracking tools could be added to these aircraft. In addition, light sport aircraft that are restricted to 10,000 feet, cannot go legally above that ceiling, and all aircraft without oxygen (including 75% of GA aircraft) should not exceed 10,000 feet. In sum, any aircraft that goes up to 14,500 feet should have oxygen on board or be pressurized.

Final comments: Co-chairs thanked the group for a productive meeting. The group bid farewell to Grace Ellis, who is leaving the Park Service, and thanked her for all her good and cheerful work.

Next Steps:

- NPS will work with FAA, facilitators, and a small group of GCWG members to address the questions and concerns raised during the Strawman discussion.

Next Meeting:

December 4 (8:30 – 5:00)

December 5 (8:30 – 12:00)

Chaparral Suites, Scottsdale

Summary prepared by Lucy Moore. Please contact her with any comments or corrections. 505-820-2166, or lucymoore@nets.com