

United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

LAKE MEAD NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
601 NEVADA HIGHWAY
BOULDER CITY, NEVADA 89005

JAN 17 REC'D

IN REPLY REFER TO:
D18 (LAME-S)

January 13, 2006

Sara Hassert, Consultant
Landrum & Brown, Inc.
8755 W. Higgins Road, Suite 850
Chicago, IL 60631

Dear Ms. Hassert:

We have reviewed the Supplemental Environmental Assessment for the Proposed Modification to the Four Corner-Post Plan at McCarran International Airport, Las Vegas, Nevada and offer the following comments:

Exhibit 1.7 illustrates the flight corridor through a portion of Lake Mead National Recreation Area. The Muddy Mountains Wilderness Area is specifically identified at 3.4.2.1 (page 3-21) and Lake Mead National Recreation Area is identified at 3.4.3.1 (page 3-24). There are additional wilderness areas located along the existing and proposed flight path that should be identified including the Pinto Valley Wilderness Area and the Jimbilnan Wilderness Area. There are additional areas of proposed wilderness as one continues east of the Overton Arm of Lake Mead. Because these areas are proposed, they are managed as though they are designated until such time as Congress acts on the proposal.

A1-1

It should also be noted in Chapter 3 of the environmental assessment that the FAA has initiated an Air Tour Management Plan for scenic air tours over Lake Mead National Recreation Area as authorized in the Air Tours Management Act of 2000. This planning effort is underway and in the alternative development stage. It is anticipated the plan will be available for public review this year.

A1-2

There is no analysis in Chapter 4 of the impact of the increasing number of departure flights will have on the natural sound environment and solitude of the wilderness areas. How will the increased number of flights affect the percent of time aircraft will be audible in the wilderness area? What percentage of the wilderness areas will be affected by increased aircraft sound, and where will the increases occur? The percent time audible and area of audibility are viable metrics that can be calculated for each of the wilderness areas. FAA guidance in 1050.1E notes that supplemental metrics like audibility are necessary for "noise-sensitive" areas such wilderness

A1-3

Note: Two (2) copies of this comment letter were received. 1) Received via fax, Jan. 13, 2006. 2) Received via U.S. mail, Jan. 17, 2006.



and national parks. Further, the accepted model for assessing noise impacts, INM Version 6.2, is capable of producing audibility-related metrics.

A1-3

There are other aircraft uses occurring in the area along the north shore of Lake Mead including military flights, scenic air tours and general aviation. Scenic air tours account for as many as 400 flights per day over this area. These flights are presently impacting the character of the wilderness settings in each of these wilderness areas. There is no analysis or discussion of the cumulative impact in Chapter 4 that the increasing departures and all other flight activities will have on these wilderness areas. With the mix of aircraft and the number of flights, how will the percent time aircraft are audible be affected?

A1-4

A1-5

To minimize the impact on the wilderness areas of Lake Mead National Recreation Area, we recommend the departure route be modified to generally follow the shoreline of Lake Mead from Las Vegas Bay to Middle Point. This will align with the southern boundaries of the wilderness areas and not fly directly over the center of these areas. This is consistent with the Lake Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for Lake Mead National Recreation dated December 2002. This modification would still allow a northern departure and protect the Congressionally-designated wilderness areas.

A1-6

As part of the cumulative impact analysis, there is no mention of the proposed replacement for the Mesquite Airport on Mormon Mesa. The planning for this project is well underway and its operation should be included in the cumulative impact as this facility will contribute to aircraft flights into this general area.

A1-7

We appreciate the opportunity to review the Supplemental Environmental Assessment and should you have questions or require additional information, please contact at the letterhead address or at (702) 293-8920.

Sincerely,



William K. Dickinson
Superintendent

cc:
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