

RESPONSE TO PUBLIC HEARING COMMENTS/QUESTIONS FOR THE HILTON HEAD ISLAND AIRPORT FAR PART 150 STUDY

A public hearing was held for the FAR Part 150 study on October 24, 2006. Citizens were given the opportunity to speak regarding the study and a number of issues were raised. Their remarks are included in the transcript of the hearing included in the Appendix of the document. There were certain issues that were raised by a number of citizens and still others that were unique to an individual. The following identifies the questions related to the FAR Part 150 Study and provides a response to each.

Additional comments and questions were provided via e-mail and mailed in following the hearing. Responses to questions and comments related to the FAR Part 150 study have also been addressed.

1. Why was the Saint James Church the only structure to have sound insulation recommended? What about businesses and hotel south of the Airport?

FAA will participate in the funding for sound insulation of eligible noise sensitive structures within the 65 DNL contour. Noise sensitive structures include such things a residences, schools, churches (or other places of worship). Based on FAA guidelines, commercial and industrial properties are considered a compatible uses and are not eligible for federal noise funding assistance. The St. James Baptist Church is the only noise sensitive structure within the 65 DNL contour and the study recommends offering sound insulation.

2. Why don't you equalize the aircraft arrivals north and south of the Airport (50% of the arrivals and 50% of the departures each end of the runway)? Then the noise exposure would be balanced.

The wind speed and direction are the primary factors in determining how aircraft arrive and depart an airport. Aircraft (especially light general aviation aircraft) need to arrive and depart into the wind. Because wind speed and direction is continuously changing there, is no way to enact a 50/50 split.

3. Why does the study recommend that the Town's noise sensitive area overlay zone use the 55 DNL rather than the current 60 DNL?

The current Airport Overlay district defines the Discretionary Noise Level as the area between the 60 and 65 DNL noise contours. Within this area, a notice is placed on the plats that states the property is subject to noise that may be objectionable. The limits of the district are based on contours prepared in the mid 1990's when the airport had about twice as many operations as the do today and extend from approximately Broad Creek to Port Royal Sound (see Figure 9-1). Operations at Hilton Head Island Airport are forecast to grow in the future. Changing the Discretionary Noise Level to the area between the 55 and 65 DNL contours prepared as part of this study is proposed so that the areas in line with the runway from Broad Creek to Port Royal

Sound will continue to provide notice to prospective residents. See Figure 9-2 for a comparison of the current and proposed district limits.

4. A number of questions were raised regarding the methodology and conduct of the noise monitoring program. (noise monitoring accuracy, selection of locations, timeframe for monitoring, documenting other noises in addition to aircraft, how the results are used with the FAA and the citizens).

A presentation was made at the March 13, 2006 CRC meeting related to the parameters associated with the noise monitoring efforts. The presentation also included preliminary sites recommended for the monitoring effort. The meeting resulted in direction from the CRC about the preferred dates and final sites locations for the monitoring effort. The four final sites located throughout the island were chosen through input from the CRC members and public in attendance at the meeting.

5. The issue of safety was raised almost as much as noise. One commenter wanted a safety study to be part of the FAR Part 150 study.

We acknowledge that safety is a concern of residents; however the FAR Part 150 Study process evaluates procedures that are intended to reduce noise exposure on residential and other noise sensitive uses in proximity to the Airport.

6. There was a comment that the time to review the study was too short.

The Noise Exposure Maps were posted on the web in June 2006. The Noise Compatibility Program was made available on the web and at the library in early October 2006, and was available for review at the public hearing on October 24, 2006. Comments on the document were received until November 7, 2006.

7. A question was raised as to whether the hotline is logging in all the calls.

The noise complaint information identified in the FAR Part 150 study was based on the logs provided by the airport.

8. A comment was raised concerning the shape of the 55 DNL Contour. It was indicated that the shape does not reflect the turns made by some aircraft.

It is recognized that aircraft do make early turn outs after departing the airport, and close in turns when arriving to the airport. These turns were included in the noise model analysis. However, the size and shape of the contours is most influenced by jet aircraft. Within the limits of the contours, jet aircraft are almost exclusively in line with the runway which dictates the shape of the contour.

9. A clarification was requested as to the breakdown in responsibilities of the FAA, the Airport and the pilots in maintaining effective voluntary noise abatement procedures.

The airport proprietor is responsible for planning and assisting with the implementation of actions designed to reduce the effect of noise on residents of the surrounding area. Any operational procedure recommended must be approved and implemented by the FAA.

The FAA's Air Traffic Control is responsible for the safe and efficient management of aircraft both on the airfield and in the air.

The pilot has the ultimate responsibility for the operation of the aircraft. It is up to the pilot to adhere to noise abatement procedures, while adhering to all safety measures.

A key component of any voluntary program is the effort to disseminate the program components to all parties involved.

10. Questions were raised as to why the consultant did not recommend new noise abatement flight procedures.

The study reviewed the existing noise abatement flight procedures and agreed that the current paths that encourage aircraft to stay over water are the primary ways to reduce noise exposure to residents of Hilton Head Island. Any new flight path/procedure would simply shift noise from one area to another and were not recommended.

The recognized that the primary issue does not seem to be the voluntary procedures themselves but that aircraft, from time to time, do not follow the proposed procedures. Not following procedures can be caused by weather or other air traffic in the area but it can also be caused by the lack of knowledge of what the procedures are. In that regard, recommendation 5 involves the preparation of a Noise Compatibility Plan Brochure that identifies the overall noise abatement program at the Airport. This brochure would be made available to all who fly into or out of the Airport, those that control the flight of aircraft at the airport, and those who plan land uses around the airport and to the general public. The intent of this recommendation is to inform, educate, and encourage pilots to adhere to the voluntary noise abatement routes to the greatest extent possible.

11. How can the noise abatement procedures be better policed. Why not have mandatory flight procedures rather than voluntary ones?

Continued communication among all parties involved (including pilots) and disseminating as much information as possible (including the noise abatement brochure) are the most effective means to gain compliance to the greatest extent possible with voluntary procedures.

Establishing mandatory flight paths compromises the safe and efficient management of the airspace will not be accepted or approved by the FAA.

12. A question was raised as to the allowable weight limits for aircraft using the airport and if aircraft, over this limit, used the facility.

The FAR Part 150 Study process evaluates procedures that are intended to reduce noise exposure on residential and other noise sensitive uses in proximity to the Airport. Issues dealing with weight restrictions are outside the parameters of Part 150.

13. Why not restrict flight operations over the Saint James church between 9 and 12 Sunday mornings?

Aircraft (especially light general aviation aircraft) need to arrive and depart into the wind. Thus, if the wind is coming from the north, aircraft take off over the church and if it is coming from the south, arrivals would come over the church. Although some air carrier aircraft can operate with a slight tail wind, it is not considered to be a safe operation for light general aviation aircraft.

Additionally, as stated on Page 8-6 of the FAR Part 150 Study, as a result of the Airport Noise and Capacity Act of 1990 (ANCA), no new use-restrictions at Airport facilities can be implemented without a thorough demonstration of need, a detailed analysis of the restriction and its consequences, and approval by the FAA. Such restrictions could include partial or full curfews, restrictions in use based on the certified noise level of an aircraft, capacity limits on the number of aircraft that can use the facility, monetary fines or other similar measures. If any form of use restriction is proposed, a FAR Part 161 process (entitled Notice and Approval of Airport Noise and Access Restrictions) would need to be accomplished. The level of noise exposure surrounding HXD does not warrant recommending access restrictions or curfews and any restriction, if proposed, would not be approved by the FAA.

The Study recommends offering sound insulation for the St. James Baptist Church to reduce the impact of aircraft noise levels inside the church.

14. Are newer aircraft going to be quieter?

Reducing aircraft engine noise is recognized as a goal by engine manufactures. Over the years, technology has resulted in newer aircraft having significantly less engine noise when compared with much older aircraft. It is expected that this trend will continue in the future.

15. Why does the study show the golf courses in Port Royal Plantation as commercial property?

The land use base mapping used on Figure 5-5 was provided by the Town of Hilton Head Island.

16. Some indicated that they experienced ground noise from aircraft engine run-ups on takeoff roll and reverse thrust on landings. What could be done to reduce that noise?

In terms of reducing ground generated noise the study included an evaluation of noise barriers. However, the study showed that a noise barrier would not be effective in providing a meaningful reduction for residents adjacent to the airport. This is due to the distance the barrier would have to be from the arriving and departing aircraft to meet other FAA height restrictions.

17. Additional questions (and answers given by the consultants) that occurred at the hearing are included in the transcript.