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Instruction Document Reporting Requirements for Commercial Air Tour Operators Conducting Air Tour Operations Over National Parks

Commercial air tour operators conducting air tours over national parks and abutting tribal lands are required to submit reports to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the National Park Service (NPS). In accordance with statutory requirements, this document details the reporting requirements and provides instructions on completing and submitting the required commercial air tour operator reports.

The information collection is authorized by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB Control Number 2120-0750).

WHO THIS REPORTING REQUIREMENT APPLIES TO: NPATMA applies to any person who conducts a commercial air tour operation below 5,000 feet above ground level over a unit of the national park system, over tribal lands that are within or abutting a unit of the national park system, or any area within a ½ mile outside a unit of the national park system or less than one mile laterally from any geographic feature within the park (unless more than ½ mile outside the park boundary). On October 25, 2002, the FAA published the final rule (14 CFR Part 136) to fulfill the mandate of NPATMA. The FAA granted Interim Operating Authority (IOA) to those operators who had conducted air tours over national parks prior to the enactment of NPATMA (April 2000). Operators who currently hold IOA at one or more national park units that fall under NPATMA are subject to these reporting requirements. Grand Canyon National Park and park units in Alaska do not fall under the provisions of NPATMA.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR AIR TOUR OPERATORS AT PARKS THAT ARE NOT EXEMPT: In accordance with the statutory amendment, the FAA and NPS requires operators to submit reports semi-annually (every six months). The first report, covering the period January 1 to June 30 of each year, will be due 30 days after the close of that six-month

period. The second report, covering the period July 1 to December 31 of each year, will be due 30 days after the close of that six-month period.

For standardization and ease of data collection, an Excel spreadsheet reporting template is available for air tour operators who are required to report semi-annually and is available for download at the following websites:

- https://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/apl/aee/air_tour_management_plan
- <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/sound/airtours.htm>

The Excel spreadsheet reporting template has fillable fields to input information and data required by FAA and NPS in accordance with the statute. The spreadsheet provides instructional text pop-up windows when the cursor is activated on the input cell(s) as well as an “Example” worksheet tab to assist operators in providing the required information.

The top of the Excel spreadsheet template requires general information about each operator: operator / company name; dba – doing-business-as (if applicable); FAA certificate designator; reporting period (respondents need to change the dates for each subsequent report); name of assigned FAA principal operations inspector (POI); name of operator’s assigned FAA Flight Standards District Office (FSDO); and FSDO phone number.

There are metadata fields for: location information where the operator provides information on the parks where tours are conducted and departure sites; aircraft information where aircraft tail numbers are included; and route information where route names are defined. These metadata fields are not expected to change appreciably after the first report completion. Operators will provide the following information in the air tour data submission section for each tour conducted: date of tour; hour of tour; aircraft make/model; and park route code.

For parks with completed air tour management plans that include a flight monitoring requirement, operators will complete the Excel spreadsheet reporting template and submit with the downloaded flight monitoring data file. The air tour management plans specify that the

required flight monitoring data must include the following information for each row of data (i.e., each ping):

- Unique flight identifier
- Latitude
- Longitude
- Geometric altitude
- Tail number
- Date
- Time stamp
- Operator and Doing Business As (DBA), if different
- Aircraft type
- Aircraft model

The ping rate should be set to a maximum of 15 seconds. The data can be submitted in a .csv, .xlsx, or comparable file format and as a separate file from the reporting template file.

Operators must submit reports concurrently to both the FAA and NPS. Completed reports may be submitted via email to both:

9-AWP-ATMP-Reports@faa.gov and
NPS_NRSS_NRPC_AirTourPlanning@nps.gov.

If preferred, completed reports may be printed and mailed via the U.S. Postal Service directly to:

Federal Aviation Administration
Office of Environment and Energy
Attn: Air Tour Reporting
800 Independence Ave SW
Suite 900W
Washington, DC 20591

ANNUAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR EXEMPT PARKS: In accordance with statutory amendment, air tour operators conducting commercial air tours at parks that are exempt report to both the FAA and NPS the annual number of operations for those parks in order for the agencies to affirm park exemptions each year. Parks considered exempt from NPATMA are defined as parks with 50 or fewer annual commercial air tours. Operators conducting air tours in any park listed on the most recent exempt park list will report the total number of commercial air tour flights conducted during the prior reporting year for each individual park where air tour operations were conducted. For example, if an operator conducts operations over five of the

parks on the exempt park list, the operator will submit five operational counts; one for each of the parks over which the operator conducted air tours during the prior reporting year.

Report for exempt parks will be made annually and are due 30 days after the close of the calendar year. Operators will report the number of annual operations flown over any exempt park(s) for the period January 1 – December 31 to the same email or mailing addresses listed above. Each year of reportable data collection will begin January 1 of each year, and each annual report must be submitted to both the FAA and NPS no later than January 30 of the next year.

The FAA and NPS will annually publish a list of exempt parks in the Federal Register and post the list on the FAA and NPS websites listed under above. The list could change from year to year. Parks may be added to the exempt list based on the prior year's number of annual operations. Parks may also be withdrawn from the exempt list if it is found, through the reporting or other information, that operators cumulatively exceeded 50 annual commercial air tour operations for a park in a given year.

Under the statute, exemptions may also be withdrawn by the NPS if determined necessary to protect park resources or park visitor use and enjoyment. In carrying out this responsibility, the NPS may request additional information from operators at specific parks to assist in determining whether that park should remain on the exempt park list. Parks that lose exempt status will return to semi-annual reporting requirements and will require establishment of an air tour management plan or a voluntary agreement.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Sandra Fox, Environmental Protection Specialist, Office of Environment and Energy, (202) 267-0928, sandra.y.fox@faa.gov.