

September 1, 1989

## UPDATE

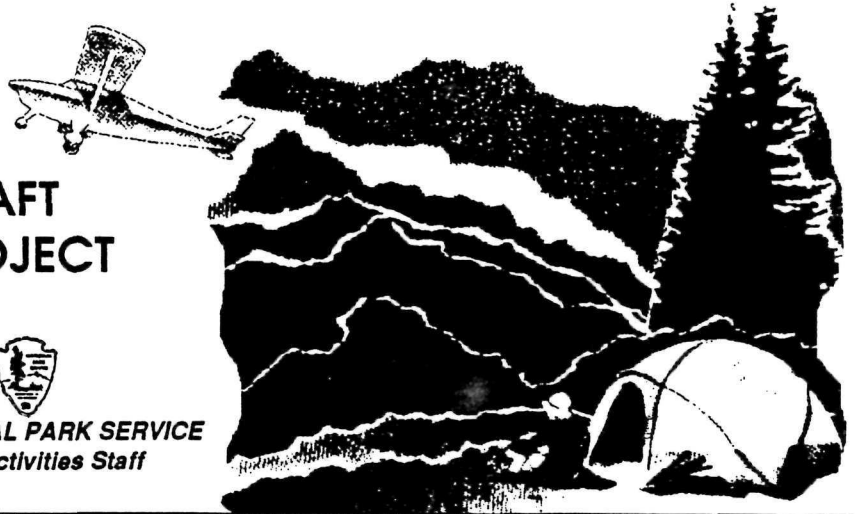
# INTERAGENCY AIRCRAFT OVERFLIGHT SOUND PROJECT



**USDA FOREST SERVICE**  
*Recreation Management Staff*



**USDI NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**  
*Ranger Activities Staff*



## CURRENT STATUS

Information gathered on FS Wildernesses from a survey of wilderness managers has been analyzed. Only 10 percent failed to respond; while 49 percent of the managers identified a concern in one or more categories of aircraft overflight, and 41 percent responded there was no problem in their particular wilderness. Based on this information, and information on aeronautical charts and use reports, the wildernesses were assigned to one of several categories, and 30 wildernesses identified as potential candidates for more intensive dose/response survey work. The actual wildernesses to be investigated will not be determined until after the study design is finalized. This list will not be released until all data are collected to avoid any possibility of biasing study results.

The Forest Service Urban Recreation Research Unit, Riverside, CA, is presently comparing remote wildernesses with those near urban areas. Data collection, including some questions related to aircraft overflights, is occurring on two California wildernesses; the data should be available to the WACOS study later this year. This will provide another opportunity to obtain information that will help prepare for next year's data collection.

The National Wilderness Conference will be held September 11 to 14, 1989, in Minneapolis, MN. We will present a poster exhibit at the Conference. The study will also be represented in a panel discussion on aesthetic values. Also, in an effort to ensure that wilderness managers' concerns are fully considered in the study, we will conduct a **Managers Workshop** on September 11th to discuss the managers' perspective on items such as: What are the major management questions that need to be answered? How bad is this problem relative to other wilderness problems? What attributes of aircraft overflights seem to generate the most visitor complaints? Who is most affected by aircraft overflights and why? What are the safety issues, especially related to user accidents caused by aircraft overflights?

At the same time (September 12 to 13, 1989), the facts on the study will also be presented at the FAA/ NASA En Route Noise Symposium, at the NASA Langley Research Center, Hampton, VA. Rob Harrison, Program Leader for Aviation at the Forest Service San Dimas Technology and Development Center (SDTDC) will offer a progress report on the entire WACOS project. Dr. Larry Hartmann, Research Scientist at the Forest Service Forestry Sciences Laboratory, Missoula, MT, will present a paper on the sociological issues and on project plans.

Chris Dumas, a graduate student at the University of Montana, has been hired to assist Dr. Hartmann in conducting a study on aircraft overflight safety issues (i.e., user safety, not aircraft safety). Data collection for this study will start this fall and continue into FY 1990. He will be contacting wilderness managers and user groups for information on any accidents caused by overflights.

**INTERAGENCY AIRCRAFT OVERFLIGHT SOUND STUDY**  
**U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service**  
**U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service**

April 10, 1989

**Required Studies and Submittals**

The National Parks Overflights Act of 1987 (P.L. 100-91) requires the USDA Forest Service (FS) and the USDI National Park Service (NPS) to conduct studies of aircraft overflights which may be impacting wilderness and park visitors or resources. To ensure cost effectiveness and compatibility of study results, the two agencies agreed to jointly participate in the aircraft overflight studies. The FS will conduct studies at designated wildernesses; the NPS at a representative sample of all field areas. The joint studies will be conducted in three phases, extending through May 1991. The Act requires further studies of NPS units not currently funded in the project.

The Act contains provisions to establish regulatory restrictions on overflights at Yosemite, Haleakala and Grand Canyon National Parks and requires the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to review current aircraft activity over the Boundary Water Canoe Area. The Act requires the NPS to submit recommendations to Congress for minimum altitudes (or other actions which may be necessary to mitigate overflight impacts) at NPS units. The FS only has to report study results, and is not required to make recommendations. Specifically excluded from study are overflights associated with airports adjacent to parks and wildernesses, and aircraft operations in Alaska.

**Types of Aircraft**

Aircraft activity which may impact wilderness and park areas includes military flights, commercial sightseeing planes, fire surveillance and other administrative flights, general aviation aircraft and high altitude commercial air carriers.

**Current Restrictions**

The FAA is responsible for establishing rules and regulations governing airspace use and management. Existing regulations provide restrictions on minimum flight altitudes at the Grand Canyon, Haleakala and Yosemite National Parks and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. The FAA has also issued an advisory recommending no flights below 2,000 feet above ground level over all NPS areas, designated wildernesses and other noise sensitive areas. Forest Service has an aggressive policy limiting its administrative flights over wilderness.

**Issue and Concerns**

Broad issues of concern are the measurement of background and aircraft sound in natural environments, the relationship of aircraft sound to enjoyment of wilderness visitors, the definition of "adverse impact" and the need to build more effective relationships with other agencies. In order to design studies to collect site-specific sound data and visitor impacts, managers at the field and national level must define their needs. This data could be useful in obtaining the cooperation of local military officials and commercial sightseeing operators about changing flight patterns or altitudes.