

Hudson County, New Jersey
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
ADMINISTRATION ANNEX
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Immediate Release

Hudson County Board of Commissioners approved a resolution strongly opposing the proposed Commercial Air Tour Management Voluntary Agreement between the National Park Service and the Federal Aviation Administration

Hudson County- The Hudson County Board of Commissioners approved a resolution strongly opposing the proposed commercial air tour management voluntary agreement between the National Park Service and the Federal Aviation Administration for the Statue of Liberty National Monument and Governors Island National Monument due to its deleterious impact on users of Liberty State Park and surrounding neighborhoods.

The harmful effects of helicopter traffic in and around Hudson County, including reduced air quality as well as excessive noise that is intrusive and disruptive, have had a significant impact on the health, welfare and quality of life of Hudson County's residents.

Helicopter noise is perceived to be twice as loud as comparable-decibel fixed-wing aircraft noise because of the distinctive low frequency, vibration-inducing and blade slap characteristics that are unique to helicopters.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the National Park Service (NPS) recently announced the availability of a proposed commercial air tour management voluntary agreement for the Statue of Liberty National Monument and Governors Island National Monument (“NPS Air Tour Agreement”). This proposed agreement would guide the FAA and NPS in the management of commercial air tours over these two parks and is subject to a 30-day public review period that ended on November 21, 2022.

The NPS Air Tour Agreement would require setbacks that prevent commercial air tours within 1,000 feet laterally of Liberty Island and Ellis Island and would also require that air tours, while within ½ mile of Liberty Island and Ellis Island, fly in a clockwise direction at an altitude of at least 500 ft. above ground level. Helicopters would not be allowed to circle or hover within the ½ mile voluntary agreement boundary around Ellis Island, Liberty Island and Governors Island. This 1,000 ft. buffer and flight pattern would push air tour traffic much closer to Liberty State Park (LSP) in Jersey City. Since the Statue of Liberty is about 2,000 ft. from LSP’s south side, helicopters would fly 1,000 or less feet away from LSP in the flight range and would be right over LSP if 500 ft. or more above ground level.

A 500 ft. minimum altitude will do little to abate helicopter noise. The air tour flights are primarily over water which does not abate noise since water carries sound better than land and there are no physical structures around LSP to break up the noise.

The proposed 1,000 ft. buffer for Liberty and Ellis Islands will only make a small dent in the noise heard by tourists on those islands while shifting much of the noise to LSP. The NPS Air Tour Agreement fails to address the root of the problem which is too many air tour flights per day.

Board Chairman Anthony Vainieri and the Hudson County Board of Commissioners strongly opposes the proposed NPS Air Tour Agreement because of its deleterious impact on users of Liberty State Park and surrounding neighborhoods. They urge the FAA to sharply curtail New York City tour route helicopter traffic that is unrelated to safety or weather concerns over the New Jersey side of the Hudson River.

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