

companies will submit "parallel" reporting formats during the operational model. They will continue to submit all currently required forms and will also submit the three new reporting formats. We anticipate that these three new reporting formats will replace the eight currently submitted forms listed above.

We have combined six of the current forms into one monthly submission titled Form MMS-4430, Production and Royalty Report. We have combined two forms, Forms MMS-4060-A and MMS-4060-B, into a quarterly information collection titled Form MMS-4431, Facility Report. We have also developed a new quarterly Form MMS-4432, Marketing Profile Report, to obtain necessary contract information from respondents. The profile report will alert us to possible compliance problems at the beginning of the audit process, thereby allowing us to provide more timely resolution.

We will collect the production, royalty, and valuation data using information technology. The information collected will be used to support:

- **Distribution and Disbursement.** We must match the royalty payment submitted on Form MMS-2014 to the Production and Royalty Report, maintain lease accounts of payments, and ensure the distribution of data and disbursement of monies to our revenue recipients.
- **Compliance and Asset Management Processes.** We must determine areas not in compliance for a lease or mine sooner than the current processes allow. The Production and Royalty Report format is designed to give us the basic volume and valuation information necessary to begin these compliance activities so that we may compare it to the Facility Report and Market Profile Report formats.
- **Monitoring Allowances and Off-site Activity.** We must monitor allowance deductions and off-site inventory and sales. Companies maintain electronic data files of this information as a normal course of business. We propose to download the data from these company-maintained files to our compliance data systems. Our intent is to minimize the information collection burden on industry respondents as well as ourselves.
- **The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Production Verification, Diligent Development, and Recoverable Reserves Calculations.** We must make facility data available on-line to all BLM, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Tribes, and State Audit offices. During the operational model, we will refine the data provided on the Facility Report to

ensure BLM can perform these processes, including monitoring plant efficiencies, maximum recovery and secondary product inventories.

- **Compliance and Asset Management Processes.** We will require the submission of supplemental information (Marketing Profile Report) be submitted to facilitate the compliance aspect of our reengineering efforts. The Marketing Profile Report information will be an integral part of the Compliance and Asset Management process being developed in the operational model. We will use this information to verify royalty value and augment monitoring and detection of compliance problems on those mines. This information will only be collected from those reporters whose royalties are based on gross proceeds or who sell products beyond the mine site.

To determine a reasonable hourly reporting burden using the new reports of the operational model, we started with the current reporting burden for the eight forms and, based on the elimination of some reporting functions and the corresponding reduction in reporting burden, we calculated the reduced burden for the three new reports. Approximately 90 coal mines currently report Federal lease production, and we receive an average of 12,000 coal financial data lines annually, 11 lines per month per reporting mine. We estimate that 2 minutes are spent on each line that is reported electronically, or 22 minutes for reporting royalty data to MMS per month per mine. We also estimate that a company spends 1.5 hours per month preparing and submitting their production data. Therefore, the reporting burden for both the financial and production data for the current system is approximately 2 hours per month per mine.

Using the new Production and Royalty Report, a respondent's reporting burden will be reduced. Adjustments made to correct previously reported information will be "netted" so that only one line will be reported rather than the two lines—the original, incorrect line and the new, corrected line—that are currently reported. Adjustment lines constitute 76 percent of the financial data submitted. Since respondents will no longer need to "back out" a reported line, their reporting burden for adjustment lines is reduced by one-half. The reporting burden is again reduced because only production by lease is reported, eliminating inventory calculations and transfer amounts which will be calculated automatically. We estimate that the reporting burden for both the

financial and production data for the solid minerals operational model will be reduced to 1 hour per month per mine.

The Facility Report requires information that is readily available to each mining company from their files, and we estimate that the reporting burden is 15 minutes per month per mine.

The Marketing Profile Report requires up to 27 lines of input each quarter, although much of the information will generally not change from one quarter to the next. The information required is readily available to each mining company from their own files, and we estimate that the reporting burden is 45 minutes to fill out this form each quarter or 15 minutes per month per mine.

The total annual reporting burden associated with these three new reports for the solid minerals operational model (5 companies reporting on 15 mines) is 270 hours (1.5 hours per month \times 12 months \times 15 mines).

Dated: January 20, 1999.

Joan Killgore,

Acting Associate Director for Royalty Management.

[FR Doc. 99-1686 Filed 1-25-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-MR-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

National Park Service

Change in Noise Evaluation Methodology for Air Tour Operations Over Grand Canyon National Park

AGENCY: National Park Service, Interior.
ACTION: Public notice.

SUMMARY: As part of its implementation actions to achieve the objectives of Public Law 100-91 regarding the substantial restoration of natural quiet at Grand Canyon National Park (GCNP), including current rulemaking [and environmental assessment actions], the National Park Service (NPS) is working cooperatively with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) on further actions to aid that restoration as well as planning for the development of a comprehensive noise management plan for air tour operations over GCNP. NPS previously determined that in order to substantially restore natural quiet to GCNP, at least 50 percent of the park must achieve "natural quiet" (i.e., no aircraft audible) for 75 to 100 percent of the day. The reasonableness and validity of this standard was upheld by the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia in 1998.

In previous environmental assessments related to GCNP

rulemaking since 1996, a single threshold of the average natural ambient sound level plus 3 decibels was applied through the FAA Integrated Noise Model to estimate the percent of time that air tour aircraft would be noticeable under each action alternative. In light of its experience and additional information, NPS is now refining its methodology used to evaluate the achievement of its natural quiet restoration standard.

Particularly, the NPS refinements contemplate a two-zone system for evaluating achievement of the natural quiet standard. The zones reflect more accurately the differences in geography, facilities development, and regulatory restraints of specific geographic areas of GCNP and allow noise thresholds to be tailored to the circumstances of each zone. The refinements apply only to evaluation methodology; the standard for substantial restoration of natural quiet remains unchanged.

This notice seeks public comment on the refinements to NPS's evaluation methodology, i.e., the two-zone system and the noise thresholds to be applied to the zones. Additional matters concerning the GCNP comprehensive noise management plan for air tour operations will be addressed in subsequent public notices, including, but not limited to, a model validation study and a noise monitoring strategy.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before March 20, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Comments may be delivered or mailed, in triplicate, to, the National Park Service, attention: Tom Hale, National Park Service, Grand Canyon Science Center, P.O. Box 129, Grand Canyon, Arizona 86023.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tom Hale (520-556-7219).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Background

Section 3 of Public Law 100-91 (Overflights Act) states that noise associated with aircraft overflights at Grand Canyon National Park (GCNP) is causing a significant adverse effect on the natural quiet and the experience of GCNP. The statute directed the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) to make recommendations to the Administrator of the FAA for the development of a plan for management of air traffic in the air space above GCNP for the purposes, among other matters, of providing substantial restoration to the natural quiet and experience of the park and protection of public health and safety from adverse effects associated with aircraft overflight. The FAA is charged with implementing these

recommendations without change unless it determines that they would adversely affect aviation safety.

A plan intended to achieve these purposes was established by FAA in 1988 with the adoption of Special Federal Aviation Regulation (SFAR) No. 50-2. SFAR 50-2 established minimum altitudes, four flight free zones, and special routes for commercial air-tour operators over the park.

In 1994, as required by the Overflights Act, the Secretary submitted to the Congress a report, developed by NPS, regarding overflights over units of the national park system in general. The "Report on the Effects of Aircraft Overflights on the National Park System" (Report), reviewed the effectiveness of SFAR 50-2 and offered a new set of recommendations for further regulatory action by FAA. The Report concluded that SFAR 50-2 had not succeeded in substantially restoring natural quiet to GCNP noting, particularly, that the level of commercial air-tour operations (and consequent aircraft noise) at GCNP had increased since 1988 and was likely to continue to increase under SFAR 50-2. The Report recommended simplification of the existing commercial air-tour route structure, expansion of flight free zones, phased implementation of quieter aircraft technology, consideration of limits on aircraft operations or noise, and the imposition of temporal curfews on commercial air-tour overflights.

In addition, the Report determined the threshold value for the substantial restoration of natural quiet: 50% or more of the park must achieve "natural quiet" (i.e., no aircraft audible) for 75-100 percent of the day. "Natural quiet" is a park resource defined as the natural ambient sound conditions found in national park units. It describes the natural sound conditions found in national parks when people with normal hearing can perceive nothing but the sounds produced by the natural and cultural components of the parks.

On April 22, 1996, in an Executive Memorandum, the President required the Secretary of Transportation, in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior and the National Park Service, to issue regulations "to place appropriate limits on sightseeing aircraft over the Grand Canyon National Park to reduce the noise immediately and make further substantial progress toward restoration of natural quiet, as defined by the Secretary of the Interior, while maintaining aviation safety in accordance with the Overflights Act (Pub. L. 100-91)."

In response, on December 31, 1996, the FAA published a Final Rule

amending part 93 of Federal Aviation Regulations by adding a new subpart (Subpart U) to codify the provisions of Special Federal Aviation Regulation (SFAR) 50-2, Special Flight Rules in the Vicinity of GCNP (61 FR No. 252, pages 69302-69333) modifying the dimensions of the GCNP Special Flight Rules Area; establishing new and modifying existing flight corridors and flight free zones; establishing reporting requirements for commercial sightseeing companies operating in the Special Flight Rules Area; restricting flights in Zuni and Dragon Corridors during certain time periods (curfews); and limiting the number of aircraft that can be used for commercial sightseeing operations in the GCNP Special Flight Rules Area (cap). Subsequently, it became necessary to delay implementation of several of the rule's provisions to continue consultation with Indian tribes on routes and address problems with the cap on sightseeing operations. As a result, the reporting requirements, curfews, and cap on aircraft numbers are in effect, but modification of the Special Flight Rules Area and the flight free zones will not be completed until decisions on air tour routes can be finalized.

In addition, on December 31, 1996, FAA published a notice of a proposed rulemaking regarding additional noise limitations for aircraft operations in the vicinity of GCNP (61 FR No. 252, pages 69334-69355). Then, on December 31, 1996, FAA issued proposed air-tour routes for GCNP (61 FR No. 252, pages 69356-69357). These latter actions have not been finalized. The FAA has initiated other actions since that time, notably delaying implementation of certain sections of the final rule to allow the FAA and the Department of Interior to consider comments and suggestions to improve the proposed route structure. Complete background information on these and other actions taken by the FAA may be found in the **Federal Register** Vol. 63, No. 234, pages 67544-67546.

The preamble to Subpart U, in addition to discussing the need for the rule, states that FAA and NPS are committed to the development of a noise management plan for GCNP related to air tour operations. This plan is intended to provide for a more adaptive management approach, full resolution of all monitoring and modeling issues, additional public input, and the provision of improved incentives to invest in noise efficient aircraft. The GCNP noise management plan is intended to ensure development of a flexible and adaptive approach to noise mitigation and management, and,

among other matters, will address validation and documentation of the most effective way(s) to monitor and model aircraft noise in GCNP.

Discussion

As part of its preparation for developing the GCNP air tour noise management plan, the NPS has reexamined the current methodology for evaluating the substantial restoration of natural quiet in GCNP.

As previously noted, the NPS determined in 1994 that the threshold for substantially restoring natural quiet to GCNP required that 50% or more of the park must achieve natural quiet (i.e., no audible aircraft), for 75–100% of the day.

The methodology previously used to evaluate the achievement of the substantial restoration of natural quiet under this standard treated the entirety of GCNP as one area and applied a single noise threshold to the entire area. The threshold used was the average natural ambient (multiple levels based on vegetative cover from the best available acoustic data set) plus 3 decibels, otherwise known as noticeability. Noticeability is defined as the level at which visitors engaged in activities other than contemplation of the national park are likely to hear aircraft noise. This threshold was used in calculating the percentage of the day and the percentage of GCNP that aircraft noise would be noticeable. And the threshold was used irrespective of differences in geography, development circumstances, or regulatory restraints of particular areas of the park, and, irrespective of the fact that it might be appropriate to apply different noise thresholds to different parts of GCNP to reflect such differing circumstances.

Based on further review and the experience of NPS and FAA in applying the current aircraft noise evaluation methodology, the NPS believes the current methodology should be refined to take into account the characteristics of specific areas of GCNP and to utilize different noise thresholds where appropriate.

Particularly, NPS is refining the current evaluation methodology by incorporating a two-zone geographic system with different noise thresholds applicable to the circumstances of each of the two zones.

In this connection, NPS, acting for the Secretary, is charged with the management of areas of the National Park System. It is the responsibility of NPS to preserve park areas and to provide for their enjoyment in a manner that will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

Preserving and maintaining natural and cultural “soundscapes” in areas of the national park system is a component of this responsibility. A concern for the achievement of the “substantial restoration of natural quiet” in GCNP is analogous to concerns regarding the preservation of wildlife, historic structures or ecosystems that are significant features of parks. As part of its mandate, the NPS seeks to make available the opportunity to experience the natural features of park areas with as little evidence of human activity, visible or audible, as possible.

All of the larger natural area parks are zoned by NPS for differing uses and differing levels of resource protection based upon park purpose and other mandates, and differing levels of development to serve visitors. In general, a park’s frontcountry has facilities, roads, parking lots and commercial services to provide necessary and appropriate visitor needs, while the backcountry, whether a wilderness area or not, has only trails for use by visitors.

A similar planning methodology is now proposed to be adopted by NPS with respect to the substantial restoration of “natural quiet” at GCNP. Under this methodology for Grand Canyon, Zone One would be composed of (1) the developed areas of GCNP as identified in GCNP’s 1995 General Management Plan, encompassing, on the South Rim, the area from approximately Desert View to Hermit’s Rest, and, on the North Rim, the developed area on Bright Angel Point; (2) the Sanup Flight Free Zone; and (3), the Marble Canyon Sector. Zone One comprises approximately one-third of the area of GCNP.

The developed areas included in Zone One for this purpose are generally those delineated as “Developed Areas” on the Management Zones map in the 1995 GCNP General Management Plan. Exceptions include (a) Tuweep and Phantom Ranch which are excluded from Zone One because they are managed to more primitive standards than the other developed areas; and (b) the North Rim paved roads because they are surrounded by proposed wilderness areas and because the roads and utility corridors are too narrow (approximately 600 feet) for practical noise and impact modeling on the scales involved. Only the Bright Angel Point developed area is included in Zone One on the North Rim. For Zone One on the South Rim, the system of developed areas, roads, and utility corridors is blocked into a single contiguous unit. This unit extends from the rim to the southern boundary of

GCNP and from Hermit’s Rest to Desert View.

The North and South Rim developed areas as described above are included in Zone One in recognition of the greater amount of human activity and consequent more limited expectations of natural quiet in these areas as opposed to undeveloped areas of the park. The area west Whitmore Rapid is included in Zone One because the relatively low designated aircraft ceiling of the Sanup Flight-free Zone (7999 feet, MSL), needed for safe transit of the area by general aviation, limits the ability of the flight-free zone to provide acoustic protection to this area.

The Marble Canyon Sector is included in Zone One because the narrowness of Marble Canyon and the SFRA boundary effectively preclude acoustic protection of the canyon floor and river area, and because it is not feasible to establish a flight-free zone while still providing for safe transit of the area by general aviation traffic.

Zone Two would encompass, in a large contiguous area in the center of GCNP, approximately two-thirds of the park’s area. The two zones are shown on the map accompanying this notice.

Under this proposal, the noise threshold for Zone One is set at 3 decibels above the average natural ambient sound levels (A-weighted) found to exist in these areas of the park as determined by previous scientific acoustic measurement studies. This is the same as the single standard used in previous evaluations (i.e., noticeability).

The threshold for Zone Two is proposed to be different because data collected at GCNP indicates that technicians monitoring the sound environment identified aircraft noise levels at levels significantly below A-weighted natural ambient levels. These technicians, tested to have normal hearing, were listening actively to note the source of noise levels as the source changed over time, noting, for example, whether the noise source was the natural ambient environment or one or more of a variety of human sources such as aircraft or vehicles. The level at which an attentive listener, such as these technicians, can begin to hear a noise source is the only objective point from which the amount of time the source is audible can be measured; it incorporates the masking level natural ambient environment, including wind. Park visitors, sitting quietly but actively seeking to experience the natural quiet and solitude of the park, were key people that NPS decision-makers had in mind concerning the phrase “no aircraft audible” in the natural quiet standard. However, with a noise threshold of 3

decibels above average natural ambient sound levels, the NPS learned that such persons could potentially hear aircraft as much as 100% of the time at levels lower than that threshold. The NPS considers this standard to be inappropriate for the whole park.

The technicians identified aircraft noise at A-weighted levels of 8–12 decibels below the average A-weighted natural ambient sound levels, depending upon aircraft type. Therefore, the threshold for Zone Two is set at 8 decibels below the average ambient sound levels, a threshold which reflects the point at which aviation noise can be heard (i.e., audible) by ground visitors seeking to experience the natural and cultural soundscapes of national parks.

The legislative history of Public Law 100–91 confirms that the purpose of

flight-free zones is to provide a location where visitors can experience the park essentially free from aircraft sound intrusions. The aerial extent of these zones will also be adequate to ensure that sound from aircraft flying adjacent is not detectable from most locations within the zones. It is within these flight-free zones that substantial restoration of natural quiet is expected to be achieved.

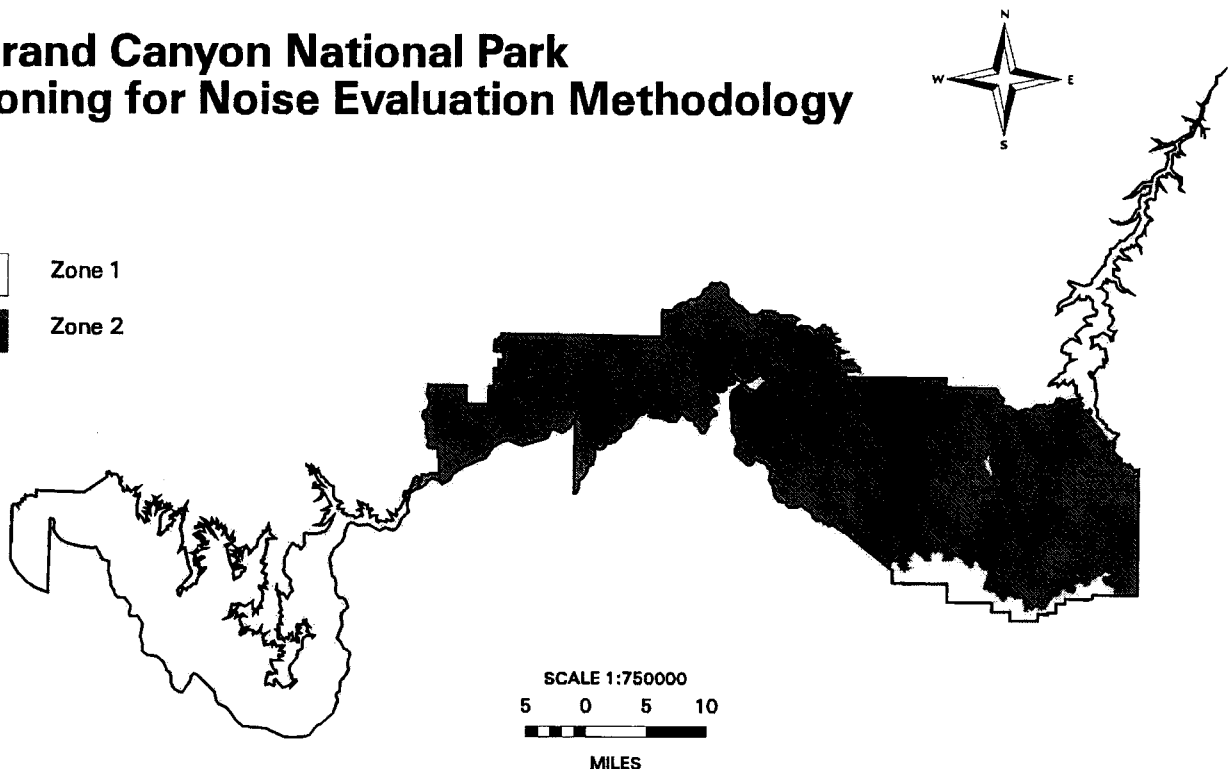
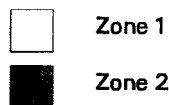
NPS considers that adoption of these changes to its noise evaluation methodology for GCNP will result in more accurate and realistic means to evaluate the substantial restoration of natural quiet in GCNP consistent with the NPS Report to Congress. The Report defined the substantial restoration of natural quiet using a noise evaluation

standard based upon the sound level at which a person with normal hearing can hear aircraft noise.

The NPS and the FAA will use this refined methodology in future evaluations of the substantial restoration of natural quiet at GCNP, unless science or public planning processes provides better approaches. These refinements of the evaluation methodology may make more challenging the efforts to achieve the substantial restoration of natural quiet in GCNP. However, the use of the two noise thresholds and two geographic zones will better achieve the preservation of the GCNP resources and visitor experiences the NPS is charged to protect.

Jaqueline Lowie,
Deputy Director.

Grand Canyon National Park Zoning for Noise Evaluation Methodology



[FR Doc. 99–1685 Filed 1–25–99; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 4310–70–P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places; Notification of Pending Nominations

Nominations for the following properties being considered for listing in the National Register were received

by the National Park Service before January 16, 1999. Pursuant to § 60.13 of 36 CFR Part 60 written comments concerning the significance of these properties under the National Register criteria for evaluation may be forwarded to the National Register, National Park Service, 1849 C St. NW, NC400, Washington, DC 20240. Written

comments should be submitted by February 10, 1999.

Carol D. Shull,
Keeper of the National Register.

ALABAMA

Autauga County

Bell House, 550 Upper Kingston Rd.,
Prattville, 99000150

Clarke County

Thomasville Historic District (Clark County
MRA), Roughly bounded by AL 43, 1145