

# Denali Air Tour Operators Best Practices to Minimize Sound Impacts

## Introduction:

The Denali Overflights Council has identified sound sensitive areas in Denali National Park, where competing uses among park visitors engaging in ground activities (hiking, camping, climbing, etc.) are in conflict with visitors who are experiencing the park via air tours.

To minimize these conflicts, a working group comprised of council members and air tour operators has developed a set of “best practices” to adjust flight patterns, when safety permits, to reduce the sound impact in these key areas.

Aviation safety is identified as the top priority when conducting flight operations by air tour operators. While the voluntary procedures described below are recommended, they are subject to the influence of weather, and local operator and transient traffic operations which may require that aircraft and helicopters deviate from these procedures to preserve safety for pilots and passenger safety.

## **Area 1) Triple Lakes Departures and Arrivals**

Nature of surface activity: The Triple Lakes trail is heavily used by day hikers during the summer months between the Parks Highway and Triple Lakes.

Air Tour Operator Procedure: Operators departing from the Denali (Private) Airstrip to the north will extend their climb beyond the Triple Lakes when practical before turning west. Aircraft arriving from the west will plan their approach to use minimum power settings to reduce sound impacts on this area.

## **Area 2) Park Road Corridor and Entrance**

Nature of surface activity: During the summer season, June 1 through mid September, Park Road Visitors and backpackers may be subject to aircraft noise from air taxi and flightseeing operations.

Air Tour Operator Procedure: Operators conducting air taxi and flightseeing operations in the Park will avoid flying over the Park Road when conditions allow. Operators will shift flights to the North of the Park Road Corridor as conditions allow. Arrival and departure procedures will make use of Healy Canyon when feasible. The goal is to minimize sound impact for those in the backcountry and traveling by bus into the Park.

## **Area 3) Mt. McKinley Summit Flights**

Nature of surface activity: During climbing season (late April to early July) climbers at the high camps, 14,000 and 17,000 foot camps and enroute to the summit are subject to aircraft sound from summit flights.

Air Tour Operator Procedure: Operators conducting summit flights are requested to avoid the 17,000 and the 14,000 foot camps and make approaches east of the south summit and north of the north summit. The goal is to minimize sound impact on the high camps and along the summit route by flying close to these areas.

#### **Area 4) Kahiltna Pass Crossings**

Nature of surface activity: During climbing season (late April to early July) climbers traveling up the Kahiltna Glacier and located at the 11,000 foot camp are subject to sound from aircraft crossing Kahiltna Pass.

Air Tour Operator Procedure: Operators planning to fly through Kahiltna Pass are asked climb to a safe crossing altitude well before arriving at the pass and avoid orbiting at climb power in or south of the pass to minimize sound impact for climbers.

#### Summary

These procedures are designed to reduce sound impact in these key areas of Denali National Park. They are subject to refinement and revision as operational experience is gained.

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