

Chapter 3. Air Force Airspace and National Park Service Soundscape Decision Making

AIR FORCE AIRSPACE DECISION MAKING

■ Administrative Authorities

Air Force Policy Directives (AFPDs). AFPDs are directive policy statements by the Secretary of the Air Force that initiate, govern, or regulate USAF activities at any level. AFPDs explain key terms, responsibilities and authority, and policy interfaces. They are generally concise, condensed two-page compositions that do not contain procedures or detailed “how-to” instructions. Range and airspace management is governed by:

AFPD 13-2: Air Traffic Control, Airspace, Airfield, and Range Management. AFPD 13-2 establishes the specific airspace-related duties of various USAF organizations for the purpose of maintaining a safe flying environment while ensuring a realistic training environment.

Air Force Instructions (AFIs). AFIs are orders of the Secretary of the Air Force that address the specific procedures and management details for implementing the AFPDs. The Air Force uses AFIs to direct action, to ensure compliance, or to give detailed procedures to standardize actions across the service. AFIs are created under controlled procedures that ensure coordination, review, certification, and approval, and they are maintained in an official record set to meet legal and historical requirements. The two key AFIs that address and guide airspace and range management based upon the principles of the policy in AFPD 13-2 are AFI 13-201 and AFI 13-212:

AFI 13-201: Air Force Airspace Management. AFI 13-201 provides guidance and procedures for developing and processing SUA. It covers the aeronautical matters governing the efficient planning, acquisition, use, and management of airspace required to support USAF flight operations. The document also establishes practices to decrease disturbances from flight operations and provides flying unit commanders with general guidance for dealing with local airspace issues.

AFI 13-212: Air Traffic Control, Airspace, Airfield, and Range Management. AFI 13-212 (three volumes) defines responsibilities and requirements for the planning, operation, management, safety, equipment, facilities, and security of all ranges operated by USAF, ANG, and AFRC Range Operating Agencies (ROAs). This instruction guides the safe, effective, and efficient implementation of policies for conducting realistic testing and training while minimizing potential impacts on the environment and surrounding communities.

Both of these extensive publications are available through the official USAF website www.af.mil and provide a highly detailed explanation of policy and procedures.

■ Air Force Airspace Representatives

Guided by the core concepts developed in the AFI process, USAF airspace representatives are equipped to deal with a variety of airspace-related issues.

Airspace Managers. USAF facilities and installations have assigned airspace managers at various levels of command who are responsible for working with the FAA and other agencies to identify, coordinate, procure, and manage airspace. Airspace managers are responsible for developing and coordinating agreements and procedures to support military flight operations in meeting both peacetime and wartime requirements. They are a good starting point for dealing with airspace issues and should be the first point of contact for issue resolution at the local level.

California Air National Guard pararescuemen of the 129th Rescue Wing, Moffett Federal Airfield, CA, climb up a moving rope ladder, from the chilly waters outside the Golden Gate Bridge, up to an HH-60G Pave Hawk. (Photo courtesy of U.S. Air Force by Tech. Sgt. Lance Cheung)





A Black Hawk helicopter is unloaded from a C-17 Globemaster III supporting Operation Enduring Freedom. (USAF photo by Tech. Sgt. Mike Buytas)

Air Force Representatives to the FAA (AFREPs).

Each military service has designated persons within each FAA region to facilitate coordination with the FAA on air traffic and airspace issues. In the case of the Air Force, these personnel are referred to as AFREPs. AFREPs are authorized to coordinate, negotiate, and communicate USAF positions on airspace and air traffic control matters within established policy and guidelines. They represent the Air Force in negotiations with competing aviation and land use interests, and they assist with airspace proposals and environmental documents. The AFREPs provide guidance and coordination services to their assigned units in the creation of and changes to airspace.

AFREPs commonly deal with the following issues: noise complaints, flight violation reports, airspace proposals, environmental impact statement/environmental assessment (EIS/EA), scoping meetings, and airspace user forums. They maintain liaison with appropriate federal headquarters and regional offices of the Departments of Interior, Agriculture, and Commerce, and with agencies within these departments, such as the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, and the U.S. Forest Service. Additionally, they are a key participant in the Interagency Airspace and Natural Resources Coordination Group (IANRCG) meetings (see “Other Airspace Committees”).

MAJCOMs. Each USAF installation reports to a MAJCOM with an airspace management office. Both the installation airspace manager and the AFREP can assist on airspace issues at the installation, while the MAJCOM airspace managers can provide valuable assistance on larger airspace issues.

Air Force Airspace and Range Councils. HQ USAF sponsors national and regional Airspace and Range Council meetings to ensure that all USAF offices involved in an airspace and range operations have a common understanding of the objectives and key issues. The councils provide for a thorough review of airspace and range issues by interdisciplinary teams at all management levels. The council meetings are open to all military services, land management agencies, and other interested or concerned parties. The councils meet regionally and nationally to advise units, MAJCOMs, and HQ USAF and to provide all the council members with a flow of information and lessons learned in airspace and range development. The regional council meetings provide a geographic focus. The units, MAJCOMs, and/or regional AFREPs may host

council meetings. The national council meetings are convened annually to allow senior USAF leaders to review pending and proposed range and airspace actions from a national perspective and to provide feedback to regional councils.

Air Force Headquarters Offices.

HQ USAF/XOO-CA. The Office of the Associate Director for Civil Aviation promotes and brokers the USAF mission to civil aviation, both nationally and internationally. As the primary interface with the FAA, the office provides civil aviation’s portal into national defense. Other responsibilities include policy and oversight of operational readiness, aircrew management and personnel recovery, and development of air-power employment options and concepts.

HQ USAF/XOO-RA. The Office of the Associate Director for Ranges and Airspace is dedicated to the management of airspace and range assets throughout the Air Force. This office advocates for USAF ranges and airspace ensuring that they are sufficiently flexible, efficient, and realistic to ensure operational readiness through three key initiatives:

Proponent Leadership: Range and airspace issues are worked at every level within the Air Force by parallel teams in Air Staff, MAJCOMs, and units that operate ranges and airspace.

Communication: The Air Force places a high value on communication to identify issues and areas of concern. The agency communicates, cooperates, and collaborates with other military services, other governmental agencies, Native American tribal groups, non-governmental organizations, such as environmental groups, and the general public to address various concerns.

Partnering: The result of the first two initiative areas is the creation of durable partnerships between the Air Force and those groups concerned with USAF ranges and airspace. These partnerships allow the Air Force to enhance its operations as well as to address regulatory and public concerns.

Other Airspace Committees. The following committees have been developed to provide interagency cooperation and involvement on issues that shape airspace.

Interagency Airspace and Natural Resources Coordination Group (IANRCG). The IANRCG is a national committee formed in 1994 upon direction from the Senate Armed Services Committee to the Secretaries of Defense and

Interior. The committee's focus is to resolve air-space conflicts between the Department of Defense and agencies within the Departments of Agriculture and Interior. IANRCG is comprised of all the DOD branches and with members representing the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The IANRCG provides a forum for interagency discussion, integrated planning, collaborative dispute resolution, and facilitation of local and regional issues concerning the use of the nation's federally protected land resources and airspace.

Interagency Military Land Use Coordination Committee (IMLUCC). The IMLUCC was formed in 1997 to enhance dialogue on land use issues of mutual interest to the Departments of Defense, Interior, Agriculture, and Transportation. The mission of the committee is to facilitate cooperation and communication at the policy level. IMLUCC membership is at the deputy undersecretary level within the Departments of Defense and Agriculture and at the assistant secretary level within Interior. The scope of issues dealt with by IMLUCC is broad and deals with land withdrawal, joint stewardship, and contamination and cleanup, as well as with overflight and airspace issues. To enhance coordination, the overflight/airspace subcommittee is comprised of IANRCG Steering Group members.

Federal Interagency Committee for Aviation Noise (FICAN). FICAN was formed in 1993 to provide a forum for the debate of future research needs to better understand, predict, and control the effects of aviation noise. FICAN members include the Departments of Transportation, Defense, and Housing and Urban Development, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Park Service.

DOD Policy Board on Federal Aviation (PBFA). The DOD management of airspace designated for military use is decentralized. Joint service airspace issues or interservice problems are resolved by a DOD headquarters policy board, the PBFA, composed of military representatives. The PBFA has established a subcommittee with primary interest in airspace issues.

FAA Users Groups. The FAA sponsors local meetings quarterly to allow local airspace users to provide input to airport improvements, airspace issues, or other topics and to provide a

forum for information sharing. These meetings are scheduled through the local FAA offices.

Airspace Organizational Terminology.

Using Agency. The using agency is the agency or military command organization that manages a SUA or an MTR under a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or letter of agreement (LOA) with the FAA.

Scheduling Agency/Activity. The scheduling agency/activity handles the daily administration of the SUA/MTR on behalf of the using agency. (Note that agency is the DOD term associated with SUAs, while activity is associated with MTRs.) This function is often performed by the using agency itself, and there may also be an alternate for after-hours or weekend coordination. Airspace will not be used for military activities unless scheduled by the responsible military office. MTRs and SUAs must be scheduled for use by USAF aircraft.

Controlling Agency. The controlling agency is responsible for ATC in the SUA, when it is no longer active for military use or as otherwise coordinated. This is normally an Air Route Traffic Control Center (ARTCC), but it may be a Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON) facility. Controlling agencies for SUAs are listed on the legend of a sectional chart.

The U.S. NOTAM Office (USNOF). The USNOF operates under the FAA and is charged with operating and monitoring the Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) system. NOTAMs are an FAA method of distributing information to pilots. They may contain new information concerning the establishment, condition, or change in any component of the NAS. NOTAMs may be regulatory (restrictive) or advisory (nonrestrictive information to pilots) in nature.



An F-16 Fighting Falcon from Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, returns to base after a local training mission.
(U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Allen)



A B-1B Lancer flies a mission supporting Operation Enduring Freedom. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Sarah Webb-Frost)

■ Decision-Making Processes

USAF airspace proposals require agency review and approval prior to formal submission to the FAA. FAA headquarters has final approval authority for airspace proposals, although requests are first reviewed by, and usually developed in conjunction with the appropriate FAA local facilities and regional offices. All federal proposals, including USAF proposals for airspace changes, must comply with processes established for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In addition, the FAA has established processes for ensuring that proposals affecting aviation adequately consider all the aeronautical concerns of the users of the nation's airspace. These processes are described in greater detail below.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Other Environmental Laws. NEPA is the nation's charter for the protection of the environment. It requires all federal agencies to analyze the potential impacts of all proposed actions on the human and natural environments. Compliance with a number of federal laws protecting the quality of the environment, including the Endangered Species Act, the Wilderness Act, the Clean Water and Clean Air Acts, and the Marine Mammal Protection Act, is addressed through NEPA consultation processes. NEPA also requires that the public be involved in the planning process and that their concerns be considered prior to reaching a decision on any proposed action.

When an airspace proposal originates within the Air Force, the Air Force is the lead agency and the FAA acts as the cooperating agency. In this role the FAA represents the collective interests of civilian airspace users. The lead agency is responsible for developing the preliminary airspace proposal and for managing the NEPA compliance process, including assuring appropriate notice to the public, user groups, and other agencies. The AFREP located at FAA headquarters serves as the key facilitator between the Air Force, the FAA, and the affected land management agencies in this process.

NEPA compliance may take one of four paths, depending upon the nature of the proposal.

Categorical Exclusion. Some actions may be categorically excluded (CATEX) from additional NEPA consideration. These actions are specifically identified in the regulations and generally consist of routine and repetitive federal actions that have been determined not to represent a significant impact upon the human or natural environment. The approved list of USAF

CATEXs is in AFI 32-7061. CATEXs apply to actions in the United States and abroad.

Environmental Assessment. Actions that are not subject to the categorical exclusion but do not warrant a "significant federal action" must be given an environmental assessment (EA). These actions are evaluated in a process that identifies the areas of the environment likely to be impacted by the proposed federal action, the probable consequences of the impacts, and proposed mitigating actions. Every EA must lead to a finding of no significant impact (FONSI), a decision to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS), or a decision not to move forward on the proposal. EAs require review by other agencies as well as public involvement and can take several months to a year to prepare. Details on EAs are in AFI 32-7061.

Environmental Impact Statement. Lastly, the most extensive and lengthy path is the EIS. Certain classes of environmental impacts require preparation of an EIS (Title 40, *Code of Federal Regulations*, Part 1502, and Environmental Impact Statement). These include, but are not limited to, potential for significant degradation of the environment; potential for significant threat or hazard to public health or safety; and substantial environmental controversy concerning the significance or nature of the environmental impact of a proposed action.

The EIS process starts with a notice of intent published in the Federal Register and involves public scoping, preparation of a draft EIS, public review of the draft, a formal response to comments, preparation of a final EIS, preparation of a record of decision, and implementation of the proposed action with mitigation, as required. EISs normally take 18 to 24 months to complete. Details on EISs are in AFI 32-7061.

Emergency Procedures. Emergencies requiring immediate response may be completed without meeting NEPA requirements initially. Agencies are limited to the minimum actions needed to reasonably mitigate the emergency, and once the emergency is controlled, more detailed planning requirements of NEPA must be met. This fourth option for emergency actions is a rare occurrence and requires consultation with HQ USAF.

The keys to the NEPA process are (1) early identification of the issue and collaboration with appropriate stakeholders, (2) proper and timely integration into federal decision-making and (2) informed participation by private organizations, public-interest groups, and concerned citizens.



An F-16 above a solid deck of clouds over the central United States during a cross-country mission. (USAF photo by Senior Airman Greg L. Davis)

FAA Circularization Process. The FAA circularization process is used by the FAA to identify specific aviation concerns regarding a proposed action and is initiated after the NEPA process is completed. Circular notices provide a detailed description of the proposal, including charts that will help in preparing comments. The FAA sends the circular to individuals/organizations on its circularization lists, which include all known aviation interested persons and groups. This process is designed to deal solely with the aeronautical aspects of the proposed action. Resource-related concerns must be addressed in the NEPA process rather than in the circularization process. Comments relating to nonaeronautical issues are not considered during the FAA circularization process.

■ How to Become Involved in Airspace Decision Processes

In addition to attending the Regional Airspace and Range Council meetings, NPS personnel can get involved in airspace decisions by taking the following actions:

Airspace Proposal Review. The NPS is encouraged to review and comment on proposals for use of airspace. While any comments are welcome, some known issues to address are:

1. Will the proposal cause impairment or significant adverse impacts to park resources or visitor experiences?
2. Will the proposal affect the park's ability to conduct law enforcement, wildland fire management, search and rescue, wildlife management, or other operations requiring use of airspace?
3. Will the proposal affect existing interagency agreements (e.g., MOUs, LOAs) or require new agreements?

While all of these factors are considered when reviewing a proposal, a conflict does not necessarily preclude the action. However, the impacts of any proposal need to be identified and minimized.

Requests to Modify Airspace Procedures. When the Air Force receives a request to voluntarily change airspace procedures, the following four metrics are considered:

1. The Air Force is receptive to changes that help both agencies accomplish their missions better.

2. The Air Force will consider modifications if its missions can be accomplished without degradation.
3. Each agency is the authority in determining the feasibility of the proposed changes as they relate to each individual agency mission.
4. Alterations must not overly complicate airspace as to make the most well-intentioned person unable to comply with them.

In short, changes to local airspace can be successful as long as the solutions are practical and USAF missions aren't jeopardized.

Get Connected to Receive Information. The FAA maintains a mailing list for sending written notices of airspace proposals. Other sources of information on proposals include legal notices in area newspapers and newsletters from aviation organizations, such as the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA).

Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) and Letters of Agreement (LOAs). Airspace managers and park managers may negotiate MOUs and LOAs when operational or procedural needs require the cooperation and concurrence of other persons, facilities, or organizations. Managers use MOUs and LOAs to define protocols for addressing recurring activities and resolving unforeseen issues of mutual concern.

A MOU or LOA can supplement established operational or procedural instructions to

- Define responsibilities and coordination requirements
- Establish or standardize operating methods
- Specify special operating conditions or specific air traffic control procedures

When SUA, MTR, or LATN areas are located near or overlie NPS areas, the National Park Service should consider instituting an MOU or LOA with the Air Force to define responsibilities, methods, procedures, and local points of contact applicable to each facility and organization involved. The MOU or LOA can define the conditions governing the use of the applicable airspace, including altitudes, routing configuration, and limitations or exceptions to the use. This delegation is particularly important in providing continuity when either local level NPS or USAF leadership changes.

The MOU/LOA is approved once coordination with other affected groups is ensured. The parties involved in the agreement should allow a

sufficient amount of time for distribution and for participating facilities and user groups to familiarize personnel and revise directives and flight charts.

■ **Air Force Focus on the Environment and Conservation**

The Air Force and National Park Service Western Pacific Regional Sourcebook is a natural extension of the Air Force's longtime commitment to the environment. The Air Force protects and maintains its trust of lands and waterways through a comprehensive program of natural and cultural resource management. Site and species-specific programs ensure proper land use management, preservation of natural habitats, and protection of rare, threatened, and endangered species. Effective cultural resource management protects artifacts and historic structures from harm, respecting their significance and preventing impact from current and future planned activities.

To maximize protection of valued resources, an environmental impact analysis process involves the community in a comprehensive analysis of proposed projects to ensure minimal disruption to fragile ecosystems, archaeological artifacts, and historical structures.

USAF conservation programs develop cooperative agreements and alliances with public agencies, academic institutions, and environmental preservation groups. Environmental organizations such as The Nature Conservancy work closely with the Air Force. USAF environmental management has twice been the recipient of The Nature Conservancy President's Award.

USAF installations join with communities they serve to celebrate Earth Day (April 22) each year as part of a year-long commitment to environmental stewardship. Earth Day USAF activities include presentations, environmental displays, fairs, nature walks, open houses, recycling demonstrations, tree plantings, environmental awareness and cleanup site tours, special activities for students, and other community outreach activities showcasing USAF accomplishments throughout the year.

The Trust for Historic Preservation sponsors the Historic Preservation Week Partnership Program to promote National Historic Preservation Week (second week in May). The trust provides local community groups funds to sponsor Historic Preservation Week activities at various USAF installations, as a collaborative effort between the community and the installa-

tion. Activities include media presentations, open houses, walking tours of historic sites, recognition ceremonies, dedication of commemorative plaques, and military history demonstrations.

The Air Force takes a "big picture" approach to natural and cultural resources management. Comprehensive analyses of proposed activities ensure that the integrity of each program component contributes to the integrity of the whole. The Air Force and DOD partnered with The Nature Conservancy and other environmental organizations to develop *Conserving Biodiversity: A Handbook for Natural Resource Managers* for the DOD. The handbook assists installations in developing a comprehensive approach to natural resources management.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE SOUNDSCAPE DECISION MAKING

■ **Legislative and Administrative Authorities**

The decisions made by park superintendents and all other NPS managers are directed by the Constitution; by federal laws, treaties, proclamations, executive orders, and regulations; by directives from the Secretary of the Interior and the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, and by NPS regulations and policies.

Primary NPS Authorities. The property clause of the U.S. Constitution gives Congress the authority to develop laws governing the management of the National Park System. Under this authority Congress has established the National Park Service and authorized it to "promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks."

Three laws constitute the primary authorities for administering the National Park System:

- **The National Park Service Organic Act of 1916** charges the agency with stewardship of the nation's national parks to "conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."
- **The General Authorities Act of 1970** defines the National Park System as including all areas administered by the National Park Service "for park, monument, historic, parkway, recreational, or other purposes" and declares that all units of the system will be managed in

A *soundscape* is the total ambient acoustic environment associated with a given area, such as a national park. In a national park setting, the soundscape is usually composed of both natural ambient sounds and a variety of human-made sounds. Examples of natural ambient sounds are the sounds of birds chirping, wind, waterfalls, elk bugling, and wolves howling. Examples of human-made sounds are the sounds of traffic, aircraft, visitors talking, and radios playing. The most noticeable condition in a natural area may be the absence of noise, which is rarely experienced by people who live in cities and suburban areas.



Great Egret at Everglades National Park, Florida (Photo courtesy of Bill Witmer)

accordance with the congressional direction found in the National Park Service Organic Act and other relevant legislation, as well as with each park's individual statutory directives.

- The **Redwoods Act of 1978** reaffirms the equal importance of all units of the National Park System by declaring that all units “though distinct in character, are united through their inter-related purposes and resources...as cumulative expressions of a single national heritage.” The act further clarifies NPS authorities and responsibilities by mandating that “the protection, management, and administration of these areas shall be conducted in light of the high public value and integrity of the National Park System and shall not be exercised in derogation of the values and purposes for which these various areas have been established, except as may have been or shall be directly and specifically provided by Congress.”

Thus, the fundamental purpose of the National Park System, as stated in the Organic Act and reaffirmed by subsequent legislation, is to conserve park resources and values and to prevent or mitigate any impairment or derogation. The impairment that is prohibited by the Organic Act and its amendments is an impact that, in the professional judgment of the park superintendent, would harm the integrity of park resources or values. If it is determined that there is, or will be, such an impairment, the superintendent must take appropriate action, to the extent possible within the National Park Service's authorities and available resources, to eliminate or prevent the impairment.

The fundamental purpose of all parks also includes providing for the enjoyment of park resources and values by the people of the United States. Congress, recognizing that the enjoyment by future generations of the national parks can be ensured only if the superb quality of park resources and values is left unimpaired, has provided that when there is a conflict between conserving resources and values and providing for enjoyment of them, conservation is predominant.

Park-Specific Authorities. In addition to the aforementioned servicewide legislation, each unit of the National Park System also has enabling legislation or a presidential proclamation that establishes the purpose and significance of that particular unit. These purposes may include:

- The preservation and protection of significant ecosystem values. (For example, Redwoods National Park was established “in order to preserve significant examples of the primeval coastal redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) forests and the streams and seashores with which they are associated for purposes of public inspiration, enjoyment, and scientific study.”)
- The preservation and protection of significant cultural sites. (For example, Independence National Historical Park was established “for the purpose of preserving for the benefit of the American people . . . certain historical structures and properties of outstanding national significance located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and associated with the American Revolution and the founding and growth of the United States.”)
- Public recreation. (For example, Lake Mead National Recreation Area was established “for general purposes of public recreation, benefit, and use, and in a manner that will preserve, develop, and enhance, so far as practicable, the recreation potential in a manner that will preserve the scenic, historic, scientific, and other important features of the area.”)

All decisions made at the park level must be consistent with each park's particular purpose and significance.

Other Federal Laws. The primary authorities for administering the National Park System are complemented by a large body of laws that mandate the consideration and appropriate protection of ecological and cultural values on all federal lands, including those managed by the National Park Service. Among the authorities most relevant to the management of soundscapes are

- The National Historic Preservation Act, which provides guidance for park cultural resource protection and preservation
- The National Environmental Policy Act, which requires a systematic analysis of major federal actions in support of a national policy for environmental protection
- The Wilderness Act, which establishes a policy for the enduring protection of wilderness resources for public use and enjoyment
- The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, which preserves certain selected rivers for their out-

standing scenic, recreational, geological, cultural, or historic values

- The Endangered Species Act, which requires federal agencies to ensure that any federal action does not jeopardize the continued existence of any threatened or endangered species

NPS Policies. NPS policies, which must be consistent with all legal authorities, comprise the decisions that are made at the agency level to guide activities throughout the National Park System. The current NPS policies for park management were revised and republished in 2001. These policies may be further updated or amended through director's orders. The director's orders also serve as a vehicle for the associate directors to clarify or supplement the management policies with additional requirements they deem mandatory for program management. Associate directors may also issue handbooks or reference manuals containing recommendations, procedures, standards, examples, references, and other general information that may be useful but are not mandatory in carrying out policies and director's orders.

NPS policies state that "the National Park Service will preserve, to the greatest extent possible, the natural soundscapes of parks. Natural soundscapes exist in the absence of human-caused sound. . . . The Service will restore degraded soundscapes to the natural condition wherever possible, and will protect natural soundscapes from degradation due to noise (undesirable human-caused sound)."

■ National Park Service Soundscape Representatives

Park Superintendents. The park superintendent and his/her staff make most decisions concerning the protection of park resources and opportunities for visitor experiences. Development of joint military and NPS endeavors or resolution of any military overflight issues is generally dealt with at the park level, where the superintendent is the final authority. In most cases the park superintendent delegates responsibility for air-space issues to the chief ranger. These contacts are listed on the park-specific information sheets in chapter 5.

Regional Offices. Some regional offices also employ soundscape professionals to support parks with soundscape and aircraft overflight issues. The point of contact for the Pacific West Region is the regional soundscape coordinator. The contact for the Intermountain Region is the overflights and noise program coordinator.

Soundscapes Program Center. The National Park Service maintains a Soundscapes Program Center to provide advice, guidance, and technical support to parks for purposes of characterizing and preserving park soundscapes. The center is a detached unit of the National Park Service's Washington Office for Natural Resource Stewardship and Science and is located in Fort Collins, Colorado. The office goal is to heighten public and agency awareness of the value and character of park soundscapes so that park resources are preserved unimpaired

**Historic Mabry Mill,
Blue Ridge Parkway, Virginia**
(Photo courtesy of Bill Witmer.)



and visitors can appreciate the full range of park settings with the opportunity to enjoy tranquility, solitude, and the sounds of nature.

The Soundscapes Program Center was established in October 2000 primarily to assist park and regional staffs in working with the FAA to develop air tour management plans (ATMPs) for the more than 50 parks experiencing commercial air tour operations. The ATMPs are required by the National Parks Air Tour Management Act of 2000, which directed the FAA and the National Park Service to work cooperatively in developing the plans for any parks where commercial air tour operations exist or are proposed. In an effort to protect park soundscapes, ATMPs may be integrated into overall park soundscape management plans or park general management plans that address noise intrusions of concern to park management.

In addition the center frequently provides the following services to regional offices and parks:

- Technical assistance and expertise for baseline acoustical data collection, analysis, and interpretation
- Assistance in soundscape management planning
- Coordination with the military on mutually beneficial endeavors and to minimize and mitigate the noise associated with military aircraft training exercises over parks
- Coordination with the FAA and local officials to mitigate noise intrusions into parks associated with adjacent or nearby airports
- Assistance on management planning for other noise issues, such as personal watercraft, snowmobiles, other loud vehicles, and NPS operational aircraft and equipment
- Training courses on soundscapes management and acoustical data collection

The Soundscapes Program Center is supervised by a manager, who reports to the Associate Director for Operations and Education. The manager has a support staff consisting of an acoustical expert/wildlife biologist and several park planning/NEPA compliance specialists. Park overflight and soundscape professionals exist in the Washington Office and some of the regional offices. The Soundscapes Program Center staff coordinate with experts in the other NPS offices on a regular basis.

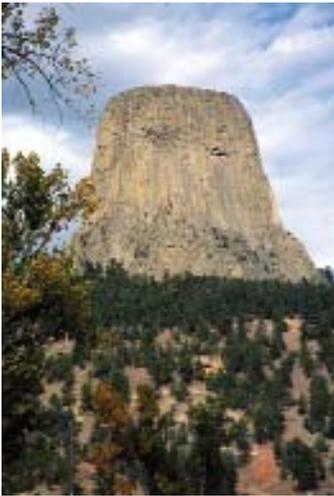
■ Decision-Making Processes

General Management Planning/Zoning. Each park has a general management plan (GMP) or equivalent planning report that clearly defines what specific resource conditions and visitor experiences are to be achieved and maintained in various locations throughout the park. Each GMP includes a map that delineates management zones. Each zone has its own distinctive prescription for a certain set of resource conditions and visitor experiences that differ from the prescriptions for other zones. The purpose of the zoning is to ensure the preservation of ecological and cultural resources and values while allowing for an appropriate range of visitor experiences in suitable areas.

Management zoning is a key tool used by park superintendents to determine the impact of military overflights on various locations within parks. Noise impacts that may be appropriate in some management zones may not be appropriate in others.

There are almost as many management zoning classification schemes as there are units of the National Park System; however, there are similarities in all of the zoning schemes that make it easier to understand them:

- Most parks' management zones include one or more frontcountry or developed zones where the majority of park visitors congregate to see significant park resources and to obtain information and become oriented to the park. Visitor amenities, which may include such facilities as a visitor center, lodging, campgrounds, restrooms, roads, and parking areas, are present. In these zones a certain amount of noise intrusion (e.g., sounds of vehicles, maintenance equipment, people talking, car doors slamming) is expected, and similar noise intrusions, such as the sounds of aircraft overflights, may be acceptable.
- Parks with significant cultural resources have one or more zones where the preservation and interpretation of historic landscapes, structures, archeological areas, and/or sacred sites is paramount. These zones are typically more noise sensitive because of the sacredness or historic ambience of the site. If such zones are adjacent to or surrounded by a frontcountry zone the National Park Service may emphasize noise management within the frontcountry zone to minimize the impacts on the cultural zone.



Devil's Tower National Monument
Wyoming

- Most parks with sizable natural areas have one or more backcountry zones. The degree of prescribed “pristine-ness” or “primitiveness” of these zones may vary, but they will generally all be managed to avoid disturbance to wildlife and habitats. The desired visitor experiences in these zones invariably include opportunities for tranquility and solitude, where natural sounds can be heard without noise intrusions. Often these zones are wholly or mostly within designated, recommended, or proposed wilderness (see “Wilderness Designation,” below). The backcountry zones of a park are extremely noise sensitive.
- One or more kinds of transition zones may be designated between the frontcountry and backcountry zones. These zones may have well-developed trails and overlooks for various length day hikes or access to the backcountry. The transition zones are generally more noise sensitive than the frontcountry zones because visitors are moving farther away from frontcountry amenities and expect a more natural setting.

Wilderness Designation. A number of National Park System units have tracts of congressionally designated wilderness or areas under consideration for such designation. Wilderness, as defined in the 1964 Wilderness Act, is an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. Wilderness is further defined to mean an area which has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. The National Park Service manages wilderness areas for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness. This management includes the protection of wilderness areas, the preservation of their wilderness character, and the gathering and dissemination of information regarding their use and enjoyment as wilderness.

The National Park Service is required under the Wilderness Act to study all areas that potentially have wilderness characteristics to determine their suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Those areas considered suitable by the Park Service are forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior as “proposed wilderness.” Areas that the Secretary agrees are suitable are forwarded to the President, who may then submit them to Congress as “recommended wilderness.”

Congress must enact legislation to designate the area as a unit of the National Wilderness Preservation System. Until Congress makes a determination, all areas of proposed and recommended wilderness are managed by the Park Service as if they were designated wilderness.

A wilderness study may identify lands that are surrounded by or adjacent to lands proposed for wilderness designation but that do not themselves qualify for immediate designation due to temporary nonconforming or incompatible conditions. The wilderness recommendation forwarded to Congress by the President may identify these lands as “potential wilderness” for future designation as wilderness when the nonconforming use has been removed or eliminated.

General Management Plans and NEPA Compliance. Each park general management plan is prepared with an accompanying documentation (EIS or EA) of compliance with the decision-making processes required under NEPA. NEPA consultation processes provide for public involvement and ensure compliance with a number of federal laws protecting the quality of the environment, including the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water and Clean Air Acts, and the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The National Park Service also uses the NEPA process to comply with the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act.

■ How to Become Involved in Soundscape Decision Processes

Opportunities for involvement by the Air Force in the planning for an individual park occur during park general management planning and subsequent implementation planning.

Superintendents should initiate discussions with the Air Force during the scoping phase of general management planning. Participation in this phase of park planning offers base commanders and/or airspace managers the opportunity to help identify potential conflicts between military needs and park needs and to participate in the identification of options that would meet the goals of both agencies.

Other sources of information on proposals include legal notices in area newspapers and newsletters from support organizations, such as the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA).