

public with the opportunity to provide comments on improving SFAR No. 50-2 with respect to safety and mitigating the noise impacts of aircraft overflights of the Grand Canyon.

**DATES:** The meeting will be held on August 30, 1995, in two sessions. The first session will begin at 1 p.m.; the second session will begin at 7 p.m.

**ADDRESSES:** The meeting will be held at the Best Western Woodlands Plaza Hotel, 1175 West Route 66, Flagstaff, Arizona (520) 773-8888.

Persons unable to attend the meeting may mail their comments in triplicate to: Federal Aviation Administration, Office of the Chief Counsel, Rules Docket (AGC-200), Docket No. 25149, 800 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20591. Written comments are invited and must be received on or before September 8, 1995.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Requests to present a statement at the meeting or questions regarding the logistics of the meeting should be directed to Effie Upshaw, FAA, Office of Rulemaking, 800 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20591; telephone (202) 267-7626.

Questions concerning the subject matter of the meeting should be directed to Ellen Crum, telephone (202) 267-8783, FAA, Air Traffic Rules Branch, 800 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20591.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

##### **Background**

On March 26, 1987, the FAA issued SFAR No. 50 (subsequently amended on June 15, 1987; 52 FR 22734) establishing flight regulations in the vicinity of the Grand Canyon. The purpose of the SFAR was to reduce the risk of midair collision, reduce the risk of terrain contact accidents below the rim level, and reduce the impact of aircraft noise on the park environment.

On August 18, 1987, Congress enacted legislation that, in part, required a study of aircraft noise impacts at a number of national parks and imposed flight restrictions at three parks: Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona, Yosemite National Park in California, and Haleakala National Park in Hawaii (Pub. L. 100-91, the National Park Overflights Act of 1987).

As part of Public Law 100-91, the NPS was required to evaluate whether the Grand Canyon airspace management plan (now known as SFAR 50-2) "has succeeded in substantially restoring the natural quiet in the park;" and "such other matters, including possible revisions in the plan, as may be of interest." In that legislation, Congress

found that "Noise associated with aircraft overflights at the Grand Canyon National Park is causing a significant adverse effect on the natural quiet and experience of the park \* \* \*."

Further, Public Law 100-91 required the FAA to prepare and issue a final plan for the management of air traffic above the Grand Canyon. In December 1987, the DOI transmitted to the FAA its recommendations for an aircraft management plan at the Grand Canyon which included both rulemaking and nonrulemaking actions. If the FAA determined that executing the recommendations would adversely affect aviation safety, the FAA was required to revise the DOI recommendations to resolve the safety impact and to issue regulations implementing the revised recommendations in the plan.

On May 27, 1988, the FAA issued SFAR No. 50-2 revising the procedures for operation of aircraft in the airspace above the Grand Canyon (53 FR 20264, June 2, 1988). The rule implemented DOI's preliminary recommendations for an airspace management plan with some modifications that the FAA initiated in the interest of aviation safety.

A further requirement of Public Law 100-91 relative to the FAA's plan (SFAR No. 50-2) was that the NPS study and discuss: "(A) whether the plan has succeeded in substantially restoring the natural quiet in the park; and (B) such other matters, including possible revisions in the plan, as may be of interest." The NPS submitted its Report to Congress in October 1994. On June 15, 1995, the FAA extended the expiration date of SFAR No. 50-2 from June 15, 1995, to June 15, 1997, to allow the FAA sufficient time to review thoroughly the NPS recommendations as to their impact on the safety of air traffic at the Grand Canyon National Bank (60 FR 31608).

The FAA and the NPS have sought to keep this process open to the public. The two agencies jointly published an advance notice of proposed rulemaking (ANPRM) (59 FR 12740) on March 17, 1994, seeking public comment on general policy and specific recommendations for voluntary and regulatory actions to address the impact of aircraft overflights of national parks. That same month, the two agencies hosted a workshop entitled, "Finding a Balance" at Flagstaff, Arizona for all interested parties. This meeting is a part of the commitment to continuing that open process.

The NPS report makes recommendations for changes to the SFAR, primarily related to achieving and maintaining the substantial

restoration of natural quiet over time and in respect to a growing air tour industry. While the FAA evaluates the NPS recommendations, both agencies are seeking public comment on how the SFAR can be improved with respect to better achieving the congressional intent of "providing for substantial restoration of natural quiet and experience of the park and protection of public health and safety \* \* \*" and how this can be done safely for the benefit of everyone involved.

The NPS report recommendations involved (1) expansion of flight-free zones, (2) introduction of quiet aircraft technology, and (3) other measures designed to minimize the impact of aircraft noise on the park. Based on these recommendations, public comment at the meeting is sought on the following specific questions:

- Can air tour operations be regulated differently, in ways that will better contribute to restoring or maintaining the substantial restoration of natural quiet while maintaining or improving safety? How? What are the implications of those changes?
- Should the future growth of the air tour industry be managed to maintain the natural quiet of the park? How?
- How effectively can quiet aircraft technology contribute to the substantial restoration of natural quiet at Grand Canyon? In what timeframe should this technology be considered? What would be the impact on tour operators to acquire and use quiet aircraft technology? How many tour operators currently use or have plans to use quiet aircraft technology? If beneficial, what incentives need to be considered?
- Given appropriate timeframes, can a viable air tour industry be maintained with the establishment of "quiet aircraft" routes? With the future closure of the Dragon Flight Corridor and rerouting of traffic on a new route to the east?
- How can enlargement of the flight-free zones effectively contribute to the restoration of natural quiet at the Grand Canyon? Are there any economic impacts associated with these types of actions?
- What, if any, impact would result from the imposition of one-way traffic on commercial tour routes in the flight corridors across the Grand Canyon (a measure recommended to mitigate noise in some corridors)?
- Would establishment of "no fly" periods impact air tour operators and other visitors to the park? What time periods should be considered?
- Would expanding the special flight rules area ceiling from 14,499 to 17,999 feet mean sea level effectively