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Comments: Having read George Nickas' of Wilderness Watch comments I am reminded of the intrusive nature of scenic flights over wilderness environs. Recently Glacier National Park took steps to limit such flights and ultimately end them. Non emergency/resource management flights should be expressly prohibited if this development is ever permitted. Wilderness deserves having it's sounds heard.

Glacier National Park Air Tour Management Plan Completed

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Date: September 23, 2022

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WEST GLACIER, Mont. [September 23, 2022] - The National Park Service (NPS) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) completed an air tour management plan for Glacier National Park on September 23. The plan establishes measures to protect park resources including natural and cultural resources, preservation of wilderness character, and visitor experience.

"The purpose of the air tour plan is to ensure that park resource values in Glacier National Park, including natural sounds, wilderness character, visitor experiences, wildlife, and other natural and cultural resources, are protected," said Pete Webster, the park's deputy superintendent.

Commercial air tours have occurred over Glacier National Park for many years without defined operating parameters. The air tour management plan protects national park resources and values by providing continued education and management oversight.

The plan authorizes the existing commercial air tour operators to provide up to 144 air tours per year on a defined route and at specific altitudes. This represents the three-year average between 2017-2019 for these operators. Consistent with the Park's General Management Plan, the plan includes a provision to phase out commercial air tours through attrition, with all remaining commercial air tours ceasing on December 31, 2029.

The operating parameters of the plan will be effective within 90 days from the date of signature on the air tour management plan.

Glacier is among 24 parks in the National Park System for which the agencies are developing air tour management plans. Each air tour management plan is developed to allow air tours to be managed in a way that is consistent with the NPS's mission and the FAA's authority to ensure flight safety. The plans meet the requirements from the National Parks Air Tour Management Act to mitigate or prevent significant adverse impacts from commercial air tours on the park and NPS's obligation to protect the park's natural and cultural resources, wildlife, and the visitor enjoyment.

An important part of the process is the inclusion of American Indian Tribes. The agencies consulted with Tribes that have tribal lands adjacent to Glacier National Park, and that attach historic and cultural significance to resources within the park which include Fort Belknap Indian Community of the Fort Belknap Reservation, Crow Tribe of Montana, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation, Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, Blackfeet Tribe of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation of Montana, and Chippewa-Cree Indians of the Rocky Boy's Reservation of Montana.

The final air tour management plan is available at this site. Please visit this NPS site and this FAA site for more detailed information about air tour management plans.

