

APPENDIX D

Interagency Airspace/Natural Resource Coordination Group (IANRCG)

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES FOR A PARTNERSHIP FOR ACTION TO PROTECT, RESTORE AND MAINTAIN THE NATION'S AIRSPACE AND FEDERALLY PROTECTED LAND RESOURCES

Statement of Principle

To engage in a partnership to identify issues and facilitate cooperative problem resolution concerning use of airspace over federally protected lands.

Background

The Departments of Agriculture (Forest Service), Defense (DoD) and Interior (DOI) have legal responsibilities to manage or use important land-based resources to meet national interests, mandates, and responsibilities. These agencies also use airspace which the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) manages. Currently and for the foreseeable future, the Department of Defense will require access to suitable airspace in which aircrews can train realistically to meet national security objectives. The Departments of Agriculture and Interior also require access to airspace overlying the lands they manage to provide mandated natural resource protection.

Much of the FAA-approved airspace for DoD flight training, and many non-DoD training and operational flights, traverse federally protected lands. These federally protected lands include units of the National Park System, National Wilderness Preservation System, National Wildlife Refuge System, National Forest System, and National Wild and Scenic River Systems, and national refuge areas. Collectively, the National Park Service, Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the Fish and Wildlife Service manage over 500 million acres of public land. In addition, Indian Affairs protects trust resources associated with 53 million acres of non-public land for the use and benefit of Indian beneficiaries. Additionally, the DoD has stewardship responsibility for 25 million acres of land. While each agency's responsibility varies to some degree, each agency has legal responsibility including the preservation of wilderness areas, protection of natural and cultural resources, and promotion of public enjoyment and use of these resources.

Management and administration of federally managed lands for these purposes may encounter competing/conflicting interests. To ensure the public's interests are served equitably, representatives from each agency will meet as often as necessary to resolve issues to ensure national interests, mandates, and aviation operational, training and safety objectives are being met. Further, this interagency group, known as the Interagency Airspace/Natural Resources Coordination Group (IANRCG or Coordination Group), will engage in a cooperative effort to identify issues, recommend procedures, and facilitate a process to resolve these issues.

Statutory Basis

The Coordination Group will operate within existing authorities and serve to identify and fulfill the many Federal statutes that affect air and land resources. Some of these statutes include the Wilderness Act, Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, Federal Land Policy and Management Act, Endangered Species Act, National Environmental Policy Act, the Federal Aviation Act of 1958, and the American Indian Religious Freedom Act. The Coordination Group will make recommendations to their principal agencies but it has no enforcement or regulatory authority.

Purpose

The purpose of the Coordination Group is to assist in protecting, conserving, and restoring the Nation's airspace and federally protected land areas through existing Federal capabilities and authorities; establish lines of communication to identify and facilitate problem/issue resolution related to airspace and land use; establish a cooperative stewardship of air and land resources by working in partnership with other Federal agencies; enhance aviation safety and operational deconfliction; integrate Federal actions and programs with state, local, and non-governmental efforts; and to provide a framework for action that effectively focuses agency expertise and resources on jointly identified problems to facilitate demonstrable environmental and programmatic results that may serve as models for effective management of air and land resources. The Coordination Group will work to identify and facilitate potential issue and conflict resolution at the preliminary stages of planning and develop recommendations for joint military training and information sharing opportunities.

General Scope

The Coordination Group 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. Initial efforts of the Coordination Group will focus on issues and conflicts among airspace and land managers which have been identified.

Coordination Group membership may include representatives from the Departments of the Air Force, Army, Navy (including the Marine Corps), their respective reserve components, Federal Aviation Administration, Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior, Assistant Secretary -Indian Affairs, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Forest Service, and other interested Federal agencies or organizations which have jurisdiction, mandates, responsibilities, or interests in federally protected lands and airspace.

Responsibilities

The coordination group will:

- Meet regularly to identify conflicts early in the airspace and land use planning process and facilitate resolving conflicts at the lowest practical level.
- Foster a continuous dialogue between representatives and contribute to a cooperative environment in which conflicts can be avoided or, failing that, facilitate resolving conflicts so as to achieve mutual goals.
- Provide an effective forum for operational feedback and information sharing.
- Provide a stewardship role toward all airspace for military use and all federally designated protected land, as tasked within the control of the Departments of Agriculture (Forest Service), Defense and Interior.
- Adopt a proactive role with respect to lands, wildlife, waterways and airspace, and protect, as much as possible, the welfare of the environment and sensitivities of concerned citizens.
- Establish sub-committees as necessary to staff issues.
- Institute management procedures to serve as the basis for future interagency airspace and land planning coordination.
- Whenever feasible, take intra-agency action to resolve problems identified by other agencies.
- Identify ways to conserve, revise, and/or delete, monitor, and otherwise protect airspace and land assets to meet future military training needs and be responsive to other public interests..
- Strive to increase aviation safety and provide operational deconfliction
- Identify opportunities for training, education, and research needs for land managers and airspace planners

Reports

The Coordination Group will document the recommendations and proceedings of each meeting and send copies to each agency representative as soon as practical following the meeting. The Coordination Group may prepare a comprehensive annual report that documents the management actions accomplished and evaluates the effectiveness of programmatic decisions and recommendations and other reports as appropriate and mutually agreed to.

Full Coordination Group Meetings

Prior to the close of each meeting, the full coordination group will determine the date, location, and host/chair person of the next meeting. The coordination group chairperson orchestrates the proceedings of the full coordination group, reserves adequate rooms for full and sub-committee sub-coordination group meetings, prepares the meeting's agenda, mails meeting invitations and proposed agendas (if applicable) to coordination group members, and provides logistic support (such as copying and facsimile machines, telephones, etc.) during the meeting.

Issues

Current or proposed airspace and land management issues which do not have another forum for resolution should be presented to the Interagency Airspace/ Natural Resource Coordination Group for review. Issues can be presented orally during the full coordination group and/or sub-committee sub-coordination group meetings or in writing anytime between meetings. The issue sponsor should describe the issue and any prior actions taken to resolve the issue. If presented to the full working group, the sub-committee sub-coordination group chairmen will decide collectively which sub-committee sub-coordination group is best suited to facilitate resolving the issue.

Sub-Committee Sub-Coordination Groups

The full coordination group will establish sub-committee sub-coordination groups, as needed to review and facilitate solutions to new and current issues. , Sub-committee sub-coordination groups will be established and abolished, as needed, to expeditiously facilitate problem resolution. Three sub-committee sub-coordination groups currently exist:

- Operations and Safety
- NEPA, Planning, and Environmental Effects
- Education and Coordination

Each sub-committee sub-coordination group will elect a chairperson who will serve in that capacity until replaced by voluntary resignation or through involuntary working group actions/election. The Steering Committee will review each chairperson and co-chairperson position every two years to ensure that each person wants to continue to serve in that position and that there is the right mix of airspace and land management personnel in those position. Each sub-committee sub-coordination group should strive to have equal representation from airspace and land management agencies.

To help facilitate issue resolution expeditiously, each sub-committee sub-coordination group member should offer their expertise, as applicable, and assistance to help resolve issues. These actions would normally take the form of presenting or arranging informative briefings, attending fact gathering meetings/ interviews, soliciting information from other agencies/corporations, etc. Written correspondence should be printed on the coordination group member's own letterhead stationary or blank paper. Because each coordination group member voluntarily supports the working group process, coordination group chairman and other coordination group members cannot culpably enforce any actions or time deadlines.

Issues that cannot be resolved due to ambiguity, complexity, lack of jurisdiction, etc. will be presented to the full coordination group to solicit additional clarification and/ or resolution approaches. In the absence of additional information, the full coordination group will vote to determine the issue's disposition.

Steering Committee Group

A steering committee steering group will be comprised of the sub-committee sub-coordination group chairpersons and co-chairpersons, and any other person(s) upon consent of the full coordination group. The Steering Committee will meet as often as necessary. The Steering Committee coordination group will:

- Ensure the tenets of the working group are upheld
- Resolve any issues requiring arbitration
- Propose an agenda for upcoming meetings
- Make recommendations, as necessary, for full working group consideration
- Determine who will attend the Interagency Military Land Use Coordinating Committee (IMLUCC) meetings
- Determine the approach to respond to IMLUCC tasking.

Voting and Decision Making

The Steering Committee is empowered to enact decisions that affect the Coordination Group's basic operation and function. A quorum, two-thirds of the Steering Committee membership, must be present or proxied and concur to enact a proposal.