



DATE: December 11, 2003

TO: Haines Borough Planning Commission

FROM: Barbara Sheinberg, AICP, Sheinberg Associates

SUBJECT: Possible Heliports in Haines Borough - Public Comment Report

## **1.0 Bulleted Summary Key Comments/Points**

- **Many residents were moderately to very dissatisfied with the Heliport Evaluation Survey format and some of the criteria.**
- **Residents seek recognition of the many hours of citizen work, as far back as the early 1990's, that has been spent on this issue, including work by the former Helicopter Service Area Board.** This work should be reviewed and respected. Many comment that the role of elected and appointed officials is to represent residents who live out the highway and heed residents' votes, opinions and rights; the Assembly's job is to work to eliminate the negative impacts of the helicopter industry to residents and existing uses.
- **Virtually all support the airport as a heliport.** The most frequent comment is that the airport is supported as a heliport. Many find this the only appropriate site.
- A "screening level review" was conducted to quantify and compare the number of residents that would be affected by noise at each possible site. To do this the number of parcels and developed parcels (assumed to roughly equate to the number of dwellings) within a 3,000 ft of each possible heliport were counted by the Borough GIS. Note that many factors influence how sound travels including weather and topography; helicopter sounds will often be heard far beyond 3,000 ft.

**Possible heliport sites with the fewest number of developed parcels within 3,000 ft of the site are: (5) Devil's Elbow, (8) Tsirku River drainage site, (14) Eldred Rock, and (1) Porcupine. Possible heliport sites with the most developed parcels within 3,000 ft of the site are: (4) 40 acre parcel at Steel Bridge, (15) Excursion Inlet, (10) 18-mile Stewart property, (9) 19-mile slide area, and (2) 33-mile roadhouse.**

- **If weather permits, possible heliport sites 9-15 could tend to favor State SUD designated flight path B, along the Takhin River rather than flight path A, along the highway and Chilkat River (thus less flying over dwellings).**

- A general “screening level” review of the impact to anadromous streams, wetlands and bird habitat was prepared. **In general, the sites that raise fewer concerns over impact to the natural environment are the sites that are already developed, including the (11) airport, (12) sawmill, (13) tankfarm, (2) 33-mile (and also (14) Eldred Rock). The already developed 18-mile site (10) is an exception to this generalization as it is near to Bald Eagle Council Grounds and is a designated moose winter concentration area. Sites with a higher level of concern over potential impact to the natural environment include the (4) Steel Bridge parcel, (6) sandy DOT&PF area, (7) Wells Bridge, and (8) Tsirku River drainage. Also, there is an active goshawk nest in the Porcupine area.**
- **Some favor remote sites (Devil’s Elbow, Tsirku) where fewer residents are immediately affected by noise, the “trade-off” for some is concern over possible biological and environmental impact.**
- **Some suggest that only already developed sites should be considered**, such as the airport, saw mill, tank farm, 33-mile, where industrial impacts are already expected and known.
- **Some suggest that it makes no sense to consider sites close to the airport** such as the sawmill or tankfarm, since they are so proximate to the airport where helicopters can already take off and land.
- **(1) Porcupine, (5) Devil’s Elbow, (11) the Airport, and (14) Eldred Rock had higher scores (more favorable) relative to other sites** on the Heliport Evaluation Matrix.
- Many suggest that noise and safety factors be given highest consideration when heliport sites are considered as these impacts are of most concern to residents and are the impacts most difficult to minimize or mitigate.
- Questions and points for clarification that are raised repeatedly include:
  - o Are heli-ski operators and operations now covered by the Borough’s Title 5 Tour Permits?
  - o Hard data on local economic benefits from the heli-ski industry should be prepared to facilitate informed decisions on how much public sector investment is appropriate for the industry.
  - o What exactly does “existing use” in the General Use zoning district mean vis-à-vis helicopters (§18.70.030 M) Is it linked to level of use? Will a Conditional Use permit ever be needed?

## **2.0 BACKGROUND, PURPOSE AND PROCESS**

Helicopter landing and takeoff is allowed at the Haines Airport and heliports are a Use-by Right in the Heavy Industrial zoning district. In addition, Haines Municipal Code §18.70.030 establishes that heliports are a Conditional Use in the General Use zoning district, and it is commonly mentioned that helicopter take-offs and landings are considered an “existing use” at 33-mile and 18-mile.

Other relevant information is that the State recently issued its Special Use Designation (SUD) regulations for heli-skiing in designated areas of Haines. The SUD designates two flight paths from the airport, one along the south side of the highway-Chilkat River where a minimum of 1,500 ft altitude is required, and the other along the Takhin River where a minimum of 5,000 ft altitude is required, to access designated areas of State land where heli-skiing is allowed, during prescribed months. The period within which an appeal to the SUD could be filed closed November 29, 2003. Also, helicopter landings are not allowed in the Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve.

The Haines Borough Assembly asked that the Planning Commission recommend one (or more) sites for a heliport that could serve ad-hoc, recreational helicopter activities.

This has been requested due to noise and safety concerns that have been raised with periodic use of the 18-mile and 33-mile sites, as well as the fact that designating a heliport could give some stability and predictability to the recreational heli-industries, possibly encouraging investment.

A challenge for the Planning Commission was how to objectively evaluate the pros and cons of possible heliport sites, as this issue raises both a variety of concerns over impacts and emotions. To accomplish this, the Planning Commission:

- Discussed this matter with the public at two Planning Commission meetings: November 13, 2003 (at Mosquito Lake) and December 4, 2003.
- At the December 4 meeting the Commission listened to formal comment on this matter for over two hours.
- The Commission also worked among itself, with Sheinberg Associates community planning consultants, and with the public to ‘brainstorm’ a number of possible heliport sites and criteria against which possible heliport sites could be evaluated. Further, Borough staff used its computer GIS (geographic information system) to count the number of parcels near each possible heliport site and Haines area ADF&G staff supplied general “screening level” information about wetlands and habitat near each possible site. General criteria included Land Use, Noise, Site Acquisition and Development, Safety, Economics and the Natural Environment. The resultant Heliport Evaluation Matrix and 4-page color map series was mailed to over 70 residents and made available to the general public in late November. Residents had just over a week to return the surveys. Fifty-six (56) surveys or comments letters were submitted.

Despite the fact that many residents were moderately to very dissatisfied with the Heliport Evaluation Survey format and some of the criteria, the survey did generate valuable comment on the topic for the Planning Commission<sup>1</sup>.

This report summarizes public comment.

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<sup>1</sup> Residents felt the survey was confusing, that many of the criteria should more appropriately have been completed by experts rather than the general public, and that the timeframe for responding was too short. Comments made by residents also indicated that some were not familiar with designated flight paths established in the State’s SUD.

### **3.0 GENERAL COMMENTS**

#### **A. Public versus Private Land Ownership and Economics**

A survey question asked whether landowners of the various sites were willing to sell or lease the land to the borough. This generated many comments and concerns.

The “cons” of Borough ownership are competition with the private sector, and many comments expressing the sentiment that spending Borough funds to cater to one particular industry, or specifically to the heli-skiing industry which has mixed or negative support among residents, is not an appropriate use of Borough funds – “it is the Borough’s job to zone, not own.”

From a public policy perspective, the “pros” of Borough ownership of a heliport are that the site will be equally open to all (private landowners such as at 33 and 18 mile can limit or choose who uses the site); that the Borough will have more direct control over site design, development and management of the operation; and that a publicly owned facility will be eligible for funding and lower interest rates available only to the public sector.

Note that even if the public (Borough) did own a heliport there does not appear to be a mechanism to require operators to use that site if other allowed sites are functioning satisfactorily.

In response to economic evaluation criteria including whether the site would lead to increased or decreased flight time, the relative proximity of site to heli-destinations, and availability of road, phone and power, as well as proximity to developed accommodations and services, several comment that businesses need to pay for privately-used infrastructure. Others note that it is a “rule of thumb” that acceptable destinations in the heliskiers are 10-35 miles from fueling areas. Given weather factors and destination choices (see State SUD) there does not appear to be a significant difference in flight times to destinations between possible sites 1-10. Many note that proximity to developed accommodations and amenities is not relevant it is the private sector’s job to respond to business opportunities.

Other frequently cited economic concerns are about decreased property value near heliport sites. Several people comment on the year-round economic contribution that residents make to the community through property taxes and daily spending, whereas heli-skiers provide only sporadic income. Some find that helicopters will make an important contribution to the development of year-round tourism. Another comment is that it is businesses’ job, not the Boroughs, to locate and evaluate the appropriateness of sites and present an analysis of the data to justify their proposed heliport site.

#### **B. Noise**

Recognizing the value of peace and quiet to resident’s lifestyle and quality of life, disruption of peace and quiet, and the presence of helicopters in residents’ backyards are identified as major concerns. Helicopter noise, especially the duration and frequency of noise, are issues. Many

respondents note that a 3000' buffer between residences and take-off / landing areas is too small<sup>2</sup>.

To quantify and compare the number of residents that would be affected by noise at each possible site, the number of parcels and developed parcels (assumed to roughly equate to the number of dwellings) within a 1,500 ft radius (3,000 ft total) of each possible heliport were counted by the borough GIS. Three thousand feet was chosen because the Juneau Heliport Assessment Study (Michael Baker Jr, September 2001) found the noise level at the edges of a 3,000 ft corridor around helicopter flight paths to be an estimated 65 dBA (the level which starts to interfere with normal conversation)<sup>3</sup>. Note that many factors influence how sound travels including weather and topography; helicopter sounds will often be heard far beyond 3,000 ft.

- **Possible heliport sites with the least number of developed parcels within 3,000 ft of the site are:** (5) Devil's Elbow, (8) Tsirku River drainage site, (14) Eldred Rock, and (1) Porcupine.
- **Possible heliport sites with the most developed parcels within 3,000 ft of the site are:** (4) 40 acre parcel at Steel Bridge, (15) Excursion Inlet, (10) 18-mile Stewart property, (9) 19-mile slide area, and (2) 33-mile roadhouse.
- Possible heliport sites 9-15 could tend to favor State SUD designated flight path B, along the Takhin River rather than flight path A, along the highway and Chilkat River (thus less flying over dwellings).

### **C. Impact on the Natural Environment**

A general "screening level" review of the impact to anadromous streams, wetlands and bird habitat was expeditiously provided by Haines area ADF&G staff. The public was invited to build upon this by adding local knowledge about specific sites.

- **In general, the sites that raise lesser concern over impact to the natural environment are the sites that are already developed,** including the (11) airport, (12) sawmill, (13) tankfarm, (2) 33-mile, as well as (14) Eldred Rock.
- **The already developed 18-mile site (10) is an exception to this generalization as it is quite close to Bald Eagle Council Grounds and is a designated moose winter concentration area.**

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<sup>2</sup> No assertion is made that 3,000 ft is an appropriate or minimum separation, but this was a common and understandable misinterpretation of the survey's counting the number of parcels within 3,000 ft of each possible heliport site.

<sup>3</sup> Many suggest that a 3,000 ft or 6,000 ft flight path from heliport sites to destinations be drawn and the number of developed parcels within this corridor be counted for a more complete assessment and comparison by site of the impact of helicopter noise. This was the technique used by Michael Baker Jr in the Juneau Heliport Assessment study.

- **Other sites with a higher level of concern over potential impact to the natural environment include** the (4) Steel Bridge parcel, (6) sandy DOT&PF area, (7) Wells Bridge, and (8) Tsirku River drainage.

Environmental and biological concerns primarily focus on 1) concern about fuel leaks from helicopter use and associated fuel storage / transfer; 2) the fact that some sites and the area in general is so proximate to the Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve, a special place that might be impacted by helicopter use and also the foundation for a good deal of tourist-economic activity; and 3) concern about the effect of helicopter noise on wildlife behavior and habitat, particularly for eagles and mountain goat.

#### **D. Safety**

General safety concerns include helicopter use adjacent to (or flying low near) roads, the highway, buildings, parking areas, or fuel tanks. Many suggest that residents do not have this expertise and that specific heliport setback requirements from a State highway be obtained from FAA or FHWA. It is noted that Juneau-based FAA staff have reviewed the 33-mile site in the past and not expressed any verbal concerns regarding helicopter use. Others raise liability concerns, both for the Borough if it designates or permits a site, and also for private landowners, if there is an accident.

## **4.0 SPECIFIC SITE COMMENTS**

See Appendix A

## **APPENDIX A**

### **SITE SPECIFIC COMMENTS REGARDING POSSIBLE HELIPORTS IN HAINES BOROUGH**

Site specific comments on possible heliport sites in this appendix are from the Heliport Evaluation Matrix and summarized from letters sent to the Planning Commission, the Helicopter Service Area Board minutes, and testimony offered at November 13 and December 4, 2003, Planning Commission meetings.

#### How to Use and Not Use the Heliport Evaluation Matrix Results

The Heliport Evaluation Matrix was not designed to create a single average score per site on the suitability for heliports and the results can not be presented that way. Values reported for each criteria are the number of respondents, the average of all scores for that criteria, and the median for all scores for that criteria (median is the value in the middle of a set of numbers; that is, half the numbers have values that are greater than the median, and half have values that are less).

## Site Specific Comments: (1) Porcupine

- Fewer number of developed parcels nearby compared to other sites
- Landowner(s) amenable to idea
- Active goshawk nest in area

COMMENTS (# of times comment mentioned in parenthesis)

(4) Regular helicopter use should not be based out of historic sites such as the Porcupine.

(1) Not only is the Porcupine valuable in the historic sense, but could also be used at a later date by a lower-impact type of tour group.

(1) Best site for upper Klehini Valley. Fewest people disturbed. Needs services.

(1) I own land in the Porcupine Mining Area, which is attractive for cross-country skiing, snow machining, and the already designated Heliskiing. There are no people living in this area and I am willing to trade a piece of this land to the Borough to accommodate such activity.

(1) We own a 20-acre tract near the Porcupine townsite. In later stages of development, we intend to build and maintain a fixed-wing airstrip. We hope future restrictions will not prevent us from loading helicopters there as well.

Heliport Evaluation Matrix Results			
	No. responses	Average	Median
Proximity to place to warm up & eat	30	1.8	2.0
Nearby land available for commercial development	29	3.0	3.0
Adjacent land use is compatible with light industrial use/ heliport	31	3.2	3.0
Approx. no. properties, and developed properties within 1500' of site (2,0)	5	3.0	3.0
Approx no. properties, and developed properties, within 3000' of site (6,1)	5	3.0	3.0
Estimated frequency (relative) of helicopter flights from this site. 5=very few; 1= very many	17	2.8	3.0
Landowner willing to consider sale, lease or trade to Haines Borough for use as heliport (leave blank if don't know)	1	1.0	1.0
Clear approach and takeoff surfaces	28	2.9	3.0
Has sufficient area for onsite firefighting and rescue	28	2.8	3.5
Rate site compared to existing 33 mile and 18 mile site for relative increase or decrease in flight time	21	3.0	3.0
Relative proximity to heli-destinations	28	3.8	5.0
Road, phone and power availability	28	2.2	2.0
Site contains or is adjacent to anadromous stream	Near Porcupine Creek, and another unnamed cataloged anadromous fish stream.		
Site may be wetlands	There are likely wetlands in the area that will need to be avoided.		
Relative impact of helicopters to nearby eagle or important bird habitat	Likely not an issue.		

Economics:

(2) There would be a decrease in flight time to destinations relative to 33 and 18-mile locations.

Natural Resources:

(1) There is no threat to anadromous streams at this site.

(1) There is an active goshawk nest (very rare and sensitive species) in the vicinity of this site.



## Site Specific Comments: (2) 33-mile Road house

- An existing helicopter use area though concerns raised over exactly what existing use means and many wish to use Conditional Use permit and review to mitigate impacts and make more compatible.
- One of sites with fewer environmental concerns.
- Higher number of developed parcels nearby compared to other sites.
- Safety concerns with proximity to road and buildings raised but verbal report from FAA Juneau does not indicate concern.

### COMMENTS (# of times comment mentioned in parenthesis)

(3) Conditional use should be maintained for 33-mile, so landowners around the site have the right to know if flights or activities will be increased.

(9) 33-mile should not be granted full heliport status.

(2) The current site at 33-mile is adequate.

(1) Essential. Has established heli-port, easy access, services available.

#### Land Use:

(1) Adjacent land use is residential.

(1) Nearby accommodations are good but small.

#### Safety:

(1) Approach and take-off surfaces are over the highway.

#### Natural Resources:

(1) There is no threat to anadromous streams at this site.

(1) Fuel storage is a danger to the water table.

Heliport Evaluation Matrix Results			
	No. responses	Average	Median
Proximity to place to warm up & eat	28	3.9	5.0
Nearby land available for commercial development	24	2.8	2.0
Adjacent land use is compatible with light industrial use/ heliport	34	2.4	2.0
Approx. no. properties, and developed properties within 1500' of site (24,10)	5	1.6	1.0
Approx no. properties, and developed properties, within 3000' of site (34,17)	5	1.6	1.0
Estimated frequency (relative) of helicopter flights from this site. 5=very few; 1= very many	16	2.3	2.0
Landowner willing to consider sale, lease or trade to Haines Borough for use as heliport (leave blank if don't know)	2	3.0	3.0
Clear approach and takeoff surfaces	31	2.3	2.0
Has sufficient area for onsite firefighting and rescue	29	2.9	3.0
Rate site compared to existing 33 mile and 18 mile site for relative increase or decrease in flight time	12	3.0	3.0
Relative proximity to heli-destinations	24	3.6	4.0
Road, phone and power availability	25	4.1	5.0
Site contains or is adjacent to anadromous stream	This developed site should pose little threat a nearby anadromous stream.		
Site may be wetlands	Likely not an issue.		
Relative impact of helicopters to nearby eagle or important bird habitat	Likely not an issue.		

### Site Specific Comments: (3) Highway Turn-out at 31-mile

- Higher number of developed parcels nearby compared to other sites.

COMMENTS (# of times comment mentioned in parenthesis)

(1) Heliport location at 31-mile is unacceptable.

(1) This is the only acceptable heliport site.

(1) This site is best-suited for a spring heli-skiing site.

Land Use:

(1) Accomodations are located from 2 mi. to 33 mi.

(1) Adjacent land use is residential.

(1) Adjacent land could be leased from the state for 2 months.

Safety:

(1) Approach and take-off surfaces are over the highway.

(1) Approach and take-off surfaces could be safe if two trees are removed.

(1) Small, not level, emergency site only.

Economics:

(2) There would be a slight increase in flight time to destinations relative to 33 and 18-mile locations.

(1) The flight time and proximity to destinations relative to 33-mile location would be the same.

(1) Utilities are available.

Natural Resources:

(2) Relative impact to bird habitat is an issue.

(1) Anadromous streams and wetlands are not concerns for a heliport.

Heliport Evaluation Matrix Results			
	No. responses	Average	Median
Proximity to place to warm up & eat	29	2.2	2.0
Nearby land available for commercial development	28	1.9	2.0
Adjacent land use is compatible with light industrial use/ heliport	34	1.7	1.0
Approx. no. properties, and developed properties within 1500' of site (20,12)	4	1.0	1.0
Approx no. properties, and developed properties, within 3000' of site (42,12)	4	1.0	1.0
Estimated frequency (relative) of helicopter flights from this site. 5=very few; 1= very many	17	3.3	3.0
Landowner willing to consider sale, lease or trade to Haines Borough for use as heliport (leave blank if don't know)	2	1.0	1.0
Clear approach and takeoff surfaces	31	1.8	1.0
Has sufficient area for onsite firefighting and rescue	29	2.1	1.0
Rate site compared to existing 33 mile and 18 mile site for relative increase or decrease in flight time	21	2.6	2.0
Relative proximity to heli-destinations	28	2.9	3.0
Road, phone and power availability	29	2.8	3.0
Site contains or is adjacent to anadromous stream	Near Klehini River and 31 Mile Creek cataloged anadromous fish streams		
Site may be wetlands	There are likely wetlands in the area that will need to be avoided		
Relative impact of helicopters to nearby eagle or important bird habitat	Likely not an issue		

## Site Specific Comments: (4) 40 acre parcel across Steel Bridge

- Higher number of developed parcels nearby compared to other sites.
- Higher level of concern regarding possible environmental impacts.

COMMENTS (# of times comment mentioned in parenthesis)

(4) I oppose heliport and/or flightseeing development in the 40-acre parcel near the Steel Bridge.

(2) The Little Salmon River area is biologically important for birds and other wetland animals, and should not have a heliport located there.

(1) This area has been described as the “Fastest growing part of the Haines Borough.”

(1) Good site, easy access, large area.

Land Use:

(1) Adjacent land is residential

Safety:

(1) Approach and take-off surfaces are in residential areas.

(1) Approach and take-off surfaces could be good with improvement.

Economics:

(2) There would be a slight increase in flight time to destinations relative to 33 and 18-mile locations if using upper valley, and a decrease if using sunshine.

Natural Resources:

(1) This is a brown bear corridor.

(1) There is a large wetland that supports migratory swans, geese, and other birds.

(1) This parcel is in the middle of a residential area whose residents vehemently oppose disruptions of their peace and quiet.

Heliport Evaluation Matrix Results			
	No. responses	Average	Median
Proximity to place to warm up & eat	29	2.0	2.0
Nearby land available for commercial development	27	2.3	2.0
Adjacent land use is compatible with light industrial use/ heliport	32	2.0	1.0
Approx. no. properties, and developed properties within 1500' of site (35,10)	5	1.0	1.0
Approx no. properties, and developed properties, within 3000' of site (72,20)	5	1.0	1.0
Estimated frequency (relative) of helicopter flights from this site. 5=very few; 1= very many	19	2.8	3.0
Landowner willing to consider sale, lease or trade to Haines Borough for use as heliport (leave blank if don't know)	1	1.0	1.0
Clear approach and takeoff surfaces	29	2.6	2.0
Has sufficient area for onsite firefighting and rescue	29	2.8	3.0
Rate site compared to existing 33 mile and 18 mile site for relative increase or decrease in flight time	21	2.4	2.0
Relative proximity to heli-destinations	28	3.1	3.0
Road, phone and power availability	27	2.9	3.0
Site contains or is adjacent to anadromous stream	Near the Klehini River, a major migration corridor for pacific salmon.		
Site may be wetlands	There are likely wetlands in the area that will need to be avoided.		
Relative impact of helicopters to nearby eagle or important bird habitat	There are eagle nests along the Klehini River in the vicinity.		

## Site Specific Comments: (5) Devil's Elbow

- No developed parcels within 3000 feet.
- Those that favor remote location to minimize noise impacts to residents mention this site as possible heliport, though some strongly opposed.

### COMMENTS (# of times comment mentioned in parenthesis)

(2) Devil's Elbow should be considered as a location for a future heliport

Pros and cons specifically discussed during Dec 4 meeting.

(3) Heliport location at Devil's Elbow is unacceptable.

(1) Too remote to get in and out – should be for emergency use only.

(1) Any heliport site at Devil's Elbow would mean that the logging roads would need to be plowed, eliminating use for all other winter activities (snowmobiling, skiing, dogsledding, etc.)

Noise:

(1) Consider the risk to water quality and fish habitat.

Economics:

(2) There would be a decrease in flight time to destinations relative to 33 and 18-mile locations.

Heliport Evaluation Matrix Results			
	No. responses	Average	Median
Proximity to place to warm up & eat	31	1.5	1.0
Nearby land available for commercial development	29	2.3	2.0
Adjacent land use is compatible with light industrial use/ heliport	33	2.5	2.0
Approx. no. properties, and developed properties within 1500' of site (0,0)	4	4.0	4.0
Approx no. properties, and developed properties, within 3000' of site (0,0)	4	4.0	4.0
Estimated frequency (relative) of helicopter flights from this site. 5=very few; 1= very many	17	2.9	3.0
Landowner willing to consider sale, lease or trade to Haines Borough for use as heliport (leave blank if don't know)	2	1.0	1.0
Clear approach and takeoff surfaces	30	2.8	2.5
Has sufficient area for onsite firefighting and rescue	27	2.5	2.0
Rate site compared to existing 33 mile and 18 mile site for relative increase or decrease in flight time	23	3.1	4.0
Relative proximity to heli-destinations	29	3.4	4.0
Road, phone and power availability	29	2.0	2.0
Site contains or is adjacent to anadromous stream	Near the headwaters of the Little Salmon River, an important sockeye, chum and coho salmon stream.		
Site may be wetlands	There are likely wetlands in the area that will need to be avoided.		
Relative impact of helicopters to nearby eagle or important bird habitat	Likely not an issue		

Natural Resources:

(2) The Little Salmon River area is biologically important for birds and other wetland animals, and should not have a heliport located there.

(1) There is no threat to anadromous streams at this site.

(1) There are brown bear in the area.

(2) Relative impact to bird habitat is an issue.

(1) This site is adjacent to the Eagle Preserve.

(1) This is the richest bird habitat in the valley. Much more research is needed before you can even CONSIDER this site

## Site Specific Comments: (6) Sandy Open Area used at times by DOT&PF

- Higher level of concern regarding possible environmental impacts.

COMMENTS (# of times comment mentioned in parenthesis)

(3) Heliport location at the DOT&PF location is unacceptable.

(1) Good site. Large, open area close to highway.

(1) This site is best-suited for a spring heli-skiing site.

Land Use:

(1) Accommodations are located from 9-mile to 33-mile.

(1) This area is used by locals in the winter and spring for cross-country skiing and in the summer for swimming.

Noise:

(1) Too close to the river.

Safety:

(1) There are clear approach and take-off zones.

Economics:

(2) There would be a slight increase in flight time to destinations relative to 33 and 18-mile locations.

(1) There would be approximately ½ mile difference in flight time and proximity to destinations relative to 33 and 18-mile locations.

(1) Utilities are available.

Natural Resources:

(1) There are brown bear in the area.

(1) Lots of wildlife is spotted here in the spring and summer.

Heliport Evaluation Matrix Results			
	No. responses	Average	Median
Proximity to place to warm up & eat	31	2.0	2.0
Nearby land available for commercial development	28	2.4	2.0
Adjacent land use is compatible with light industrial use/ heliport	32	2.4	2.0
Approx. no. properties, and developed properties within 1500' of site (12,3)	5	1.0	1.0
Approx no. properties, and developed properties, within 3000' of site (31,7)	5	1.0	1.0
Estimated frequency (relative) of helicopter flights from this site. 5=very few; 1= very many	15	3.0	3.0
Landowner willing to consider sale, lease or trade to Haines Borough for use as heliport (leave blank if don't know)	1	1.0	1.0
Clear approach and takeoff surfaces	28	2.9	3.5
Has sufficient area for onsite firefighting and rescue	27	3.1	4.0
Rate site compared to existing 33 mile and 18 mile site for relative increase or decrease in flight time	24	2.5	2.0
Relative proximity to heli-destinations	27	2.9	3.0
Road, phone and power availability	27	2.6	2.0
Site contains or is adjacent to anadromous stream	Near the Klehini River and 24 mile spawning channel. Possibly in the Eagle Preserve. Important chum salmon spawning areas nearby.		
Site may be wetlands	There are likely wetlands in the area that will need to be avoided.		
Relative impact of helicopters to nearby eagle or important bird habitat	There are eagle nests along the Klehini River in the vicinity. Designated moose winter concentration area.		

## Site Specific Comments: (7) Borough Property Across Wells Bridge

- Higher level of concern regarding possible environmental impacts.

COMMENTS (# of times comment mentioned in parenthesis)

(3) Heliport location across the Wells Bridge is unacceptable.

(1) This site is too close to Klukwan.

Economics:

(2) There would be an increase in flight time to destinations relative to 33 and 18-mile locations.

Natural Resources:

(1) There is a moose concentration in this area.

Heliport Evaluation Matrix Results			
	No. responses	Average	Median
Proximity to place to warm up & eat	31	2.4	2.0
Nearby land available for commercial development	29	2.6	2.0
Adjacent land use is compatible with light industrial use/ heliport	33	2.4	2.0
Approx. no. properties, and developed properties within 1500' of site (17,7)	5	1.0	1.0
Approx no. properties, and developed properties, within 3000' of site (32,9)	6	1.5	1.0
Estimated frequency (relative) of helicopter flights from this site. 5=very few; 1= very many	15	2.7	3.0
Landowner willing to consider sale, lease or trade to Haines Borough for use as heliport (leave blank if don't know)	1	1.0	1.0
Clear approach and takeoff surfaces	29	2.5	2.0
Has sufficient area for onsite firefighting and rescue	29	2.7	2.0
Rate site compared to existing 33 mile and 18 mile site for relative increase or decrease in flight time	24	2.6	2.5
Relative proximity to heli-destinations	29	2.9	3.0
Road, phone and power availability	28	2.8	3.0
Site contains or is adjacent to anadromous stream	Near Muskrat Creek, an important coho salmon stream.		
Site may be wetlands	There are likely wetlands in the area that will need to be avoided.		
Relative impact of helicopters to nearby eagle or important bird habitat	There are eagle nests along the Chilkat River in the vicinity. Designated moose winter concentration area.		

## Site Specific Comments: (8) Tsirku River Drainage within Haines State Forest

- No developed parcels within 3000 feet.
- Higher level of concern regarding possible environmental impacts.

### COMMENTS (# of times comment mentioned in parenthesis)

(5) Heliport should not be located at Tsirku River.

(2) Tsirku River Drainage should be considered as a location for a future heliport.

(1) Tsirku River Drainage may be an acceptable site for the heliport.

(1) Too remote to be practical. Should be used for emergency site only.

(1) "The 26 mile community should not be viewed as a "sacrificial zone" for industrial scale tourism."

#### Natural Resources:

(1) There are brown bear in the area.

(1) This area is extremely diverse biologically. Do not develop here.

(1) Adjacent land is too close to the river.

Heliport Evaluation Matrix Results			
	No. responses	Average	Median
Proximity to place to warm up & eat	30	1.4	1.0
Nearby land available for commercial development	27	2.0	1.0
Adjacent land use is compatible with light industrial use/ heliport	31	2.0	1.0
Approx. no. properties, and developed properties within 1500' of site (0,0)	5	2.6	1.0
Approx no. properties, and developed properties, within 3000' of site (0,0)	5	2.6	1.0
Estimated frequency (relative) of helicopter flights from this site. 5=very few; 1= very many	16	2.9	3.0
Landowner willing to consider sale, lease or trade to Haines Borough for use as heliport (leave blank if don't know)	1	1.0	1.0
Clear approach and takeoff surfaces	29	2.7	3.0
Has sufficient area for onsite firefighting and rescue	28	2.2	1.0
Rate site compared to existing 33 mile and 18 mile site for relative increase or decrease in flight time	23	2.5	2.0
Relative proximity to heli-destinations	30	3.0	3.5
Road, phone and power availability	28	1.9	1.5
Site contains or is adjacent to anadromous stream	Near the confluence of the Little Salmon and Tsirku Rivers; an important run of sockeye and coho salmon. Near important chum and coho spawning areas.		
Site may be wetlands	There are likely wetlands in the area that will need to be avoided.		
Relative impact of helicopters to nearby eagle or important bird habitat	An eagle nest is nearby and swans are known to use this area.		



## Site Specific Comments: (9) 19-mile Slide area

- Geophysical/erosion hazard.
- Higher number of developed parcels nearby compared to other sites.

COMMENTS (# of times comment mentioned in parenthesis)

(4) Heliport location at the 19-mile Slide Area is not acceptable.

(1) This site is too close to Klukwan.

(1) This site is best-suited for a spring heli-skiing site.

Land Use:

(1) Accomodations are located from 14-mile to 33-mile, and from 19-mile to town.

Safety:

(1) There are clear approach and take-off surfaces.

Economics:

(1) The flight time and proximity to destinations relative to 18-mile location would be the same.

(1) Utilities are located in the area.

Natural Resources:

(1) Eagle nest and viewing area.

(1) Wetlands may be impacted because this is a slide area on the Chilkoot.

(1) Chum salmon do not spawn near this site.

(1) There are no eagles in this area in the spring.

Heliport Evaluation Matrix Results			
	No. responses	Average	Median
Proximity to place to warm up & eat	31	2.0	2.0
Nearby land available for commercial development	29	1.9	2.0
Adjacent land use is compatible with light industrial use/ heliport	34	2.2	2.0
Approx. no. properties, and developed properties within 1500' of site (17,10)	5	1.2	1.0
Approx no. properties, and developed properties, within 3000' of site (38,18)	5	1.2	1.0
Estimated frequency (relative) of helicopter flights from this site. 5=very few; 1= very many	16	2.9	3.0
Landowner willing to consider sale, lease or trade to Haines Borough for use as heliport (leave blank if don't know)	1	1.0	1.0
Clear approach and takeoff surfaces	32	3.0	3.0
Has sufficient area for onsite firefighting and rescue	30	3.1	3.0
Rate site compared to existing 33 mile and 18 mile site for relative increase or decrease in flight time	23	2.7	3.0
Relative proximity to heli-destinations	28	3.0	3.0
Road, phone and power availability	29	3.0	3.0
Site contains or is adjacent to anadromous stream	Near the Chilkat River, chum salmon spawn near this site.		
Site may be wetlands	Likely not an issue.		
Relative impact of helicopters to nearby eagle or important bird habitat	Adjacent or in Council Grounds, a high use area by eagles.		

## Site Specific Comments: (10) 18-mile Stewart Property

- An existing helicopter use area though concerns raised over exactly what existing use means and many wish to use Conditional Use permit and review to mitigate impacts and make more compatible.
- Higher number of developed parcels nearby compared to other sites.
- Higher level of concern regarding possible environmental impacts.

### COMMENTS (# of times comment mentioned in parenthesis)

(3) Conditional use should be maintained for 18-mile, so landowners around the site have the right to know if flights or activities will be increased.

(3) Current helicopter use at 18-mile is unacceptable.

(4) 18-mile should not be considered for future heliport.

(1) Residents at 18-mile should take precedence over those with new skiing interests because the residents have been there a long time.

(2) Current site 18-mile is adequate.

(1) This is private property – if the landowner wants it, great!

#### Land Use:

(1) Adjacent land use is residential.

(1) Nearby accommodations are in a private home.

#### Safety:

(1) Approach and take-off surfaces are in residential areas.

#### Natural Resources:

(1) There is no threat to anadromous streams at this site.

Heliport Evaluation Matrix Results			
	No. responses	Average	Median
Proximity to place to warm up & eat	28	2.4	2.0
Nearby land available for commercial development	25	2.2	2.0
Adjacent land use is compatible with light industrial use/ heliport	32	2.0	1.0
Approx. no. properties, and developed properties within 1500' of site (16,10)	5	1.6	1.0
Approx no. properties, and developed properties, within 3000' of site (35,19)	5	1.6	1.0
Estimated frequency (relative) of helicopter flights from this site. 5=very few; 1= very many	17	2.8	3.0
Landowner willing to consider sale, lease or trade to Haines Borough for use as heliport (leave blank if don't know)	2	3.0	3.0
Clear approach and takeoff surfaces	28	2.9	3.0
Has sufficient area for onsite firefighting and rescue	27	3.0	3.0
Rate site compared to existing 33 mile and 18 mile site for relative increase or decrease in flight time	16	2.7	3.0
Relative proximity to heli-destinations	25	3.1	3.0
Road, phone and power availability	25	3.6	4.0
Site contains or is adjacent to anadromous stream	Near 18 Mile Creek, and another unnamed anadromous fish stream. These are important coho, chum, and pink salmon streams.		
Site may be wetlands	There are likely wetlands in the area that will need to be avoided.		
Relative impact of helicopters to nearby eagle or important bird habitat	There are eagle nests along the Chilkat River in the vicinity. This site also near the Council Grounds high use area by eagles. Designated moose winter concentration area.		

Economics: (1) Relative proximity to destinations is good for lower value.

## Site Specific Comments: (11) Haines Airport

- Existing heliport, zoned Industrial-Heavy so heliports are use-By-Right.
- Most actively favor this site for heliport.
- Residents already expect noise, industrial-type impacts.
- One of sites with fewer environmental concerns.

COMMENTS (# of times comment mentioned in parenthesis)

(22) The existing site at the Haines Airport is adequate for heliport needs.

(9) The Haines airport is the only acceptable potential heliport site.

(1) The Haines airport is not an acceptable site.

(1) “Don’t sacrifice our entire neighborhood when the helicopters already have two heliports, not to mention Al Gilliam’s private heliport up the Tsirku drainage.”

(1) The airport meets the economic criteria of the proximity to services that the Haines town can best provide.

Noise:

(1) Noise is not an issue here – it’s already an airport.

Safety:

(1) Approach and take-off surfaces are already set up.

Natural Resources:

(1) There is no threat to anadromous streams at this site.

(1) Eulachon rely on the wetlands, so wetlands are an issue at this site.

Heliport Evaluation Matrix Results			
	No. responses	Average	Median
Proximity to place to warm up & eat	35	4.5	5.0
Nearby land available for commercial development	32	4.3	5.0
Adjacent land use is compatible with light industrial use/ heliport	40	4.6	5.0
Approx. no. properties, and developed properties within 1500’ of site (15,1)	5	4.0	4.0
Approx no. properties, and developed properties, within 3000’ of site (27,3)	5	4.0	4.0
Estimated frequency (relative) of helicopter flights from this site. 5=very few; 1= very many	23	2.4	2.0
Landowner willing to consider sale, lease or trade to Haines Borough for use as heliport (leave blank if don't know)	1	1.0	1.0
Clear approach and takeoff surfaces	36	4.8	5.0
Has sufficient area for onsite firefighting and rescue	35	4.8	5.0
Rate site compared to existing 33 mile and 18 mile site for relative increase or decrease in flight time	26	3.8	4.0
Relative proximity to heli-destinations	31	3.7	4.0
Road, phone and power availability	32	4.8	5.0
Site contains or is adjacent to anadromous stream	Several anadromous streams are nearby, but this is likely not an issue. Eulachon migrate to spawn near this area. Excessive noise may pose impacts.		
Site may be wetlands	Likely not an issue.		
Relative impact of helicopters to nearby eagle or important bird habitat	Likely not an issue.		

## Site Specific Comments: (12) Sawmill

- One of sites with fewer environmental concerns.
- zoned Industrial-Heavy or Waterfront Industrial so heliports are use-By-Right.
- Redundant site as close to airport.

### COMMENTS (# of times comment mentioned in parenthesis)

(3) This site is unacceptable.

(2) There is no reason to have a heli-port 3 air miles from the airport. Remove this site from consideration.

(1) This site has good access, but it is ugly.

(1) This site may be acceptable.

Noise:

(1) Lutak Inlet is an echo chamber.

Economics:

(1) Flight time is fair because this site is close to the Ferbee.

Heliport Evaluation Matrix Results			
	No. responses	Average	Median
Proximity to place to warm up & eat	31	2.6	2.0
Nearby land available for commercial development	29	2.8	2.0
Adjacent land use is compatible with light industrial use/ heliport	35	2.7	2.0
Approx. no. properties, and developed properties within 1500' of site (22,5)	5	1.6	1.0
Approx no. properties, and developed properties, within 3000' of site (40,5)	5	1.4	1.0
Estimated frequency (relative) of helicopter flights from this site. 5=very few; 1= very many	17	3.1	3.0
Landowner willing to consider sale, lease or trade to Haines Borough for use as heliport (leave blank if don't know)	1	1.0	1.0
Clear approach and takeoff surfaces	30	3.2	3.5
Has sufficient area for onsite firefighting and rescue	30	3.2	4.0
Rate site compared to existing 33 mile and 18 mile site for relative increase or decrease in flight time	24	2.0	2.0
Relative proximity to heli-destinations	28	2.3	2.0
Road, phone and power availability	29	3.6	4.0
Site contains or is adjacent to anadromous stream	No anadromous stream nearby, Lutak Inlet provides important migration corridor for anadromous fish access to and from Chilkoot Lake. Likely not an issue.		
Site may be wetlands	Likely not an issue.		
Relative impact of helicopters to nearby eagle or important bird habitat	Likely not an issue.		

## Site Specific Comments: (13) Tankfarm

- One of sites with fewer environmental concerns.
- zoned Industrial-Heavy or Waterfront Industrial so heliports are use-By-Right.
- Redundant site as close to airport.

COMMENTS (# of times comment mentioned in parenthesis)

(3) This site is unacceptable.

(2) There is no reason to have a heli-port 3 air miles from the airport. Remove this site from consideration.

(1) This site has good access, but it is ugly.

(1) This site may be acceptable.

Land Use:

(1) Adjacent land is residential.

Safety:

(1) Approach and take-off surfaces are in residential areas.

Economics:

(1) Flight time is fair because this site is close to the Ferbee.

Heliport Evaluation Matrix Results			
	No. responses	Average	Median
Proximity to place to warm up & eat	31	2.7	2.0
Nearby land available for commercial development	29	2.9	2.0
Adjacent land use is compatible with light industrial use/ heliport	36	2.6	2.0
Approx. no. properties, and developed properties within 1500' of site (30,3)	5	1.6	1.0
Approx no. properties, and developed properties, within 3000' of site (71,13)	5	1.4	1.0
Estimated frequency (relative) of helicopter flights from this site. 5=very few; 1= very many	17	2.9	3.0
Landowner willing to consider sale, lease or trade to Haines Borough for use as heliport (leave blank if don't know)	1	1.0	1.0
Clear approach and takeoff surfaces	29	3.2	4.0
Has sufficient area for onsite firefighting and rescue	29	3.5	4.0
Rate site compared to existing 33 mile and 18 mile site for relative increase or decrease in flight time	24	1.9	2.0
Relative proximity to heli-destinations	28	2.3	2.0
Road, phone and power availability	28	3.5	4.0
Site contains or is adjacent to anadromous stream	No anadromous stream nearby, Lutak Inlet provides important migration corridor for anadromous fish access to and from Chilkoot Lake. Likely not an issue.		
Site may be wetlands	Likely not an issue		
Relative impact of helicopters to nearby eagle or important bird habitat	Likely not an issue		

## Site Specific Comments: (14) Eldred Rock

- No developed parcels within 3000 feet.
- One of sites with fewer environmental concerns.
- Site being transferred from USCG to Museum.

COMMENTS (# of times comment mentioned in parenthesis)

(3) Eldred Rock is a historic site and should be preserved as such.

(4) Eldred Rock should be considered for a heliport site. It would provide a truly unique heliski experience.

(5) Eldred Rock may be an adequate alternate heliport site.

(1) Land at Eldred Rock is owned by the US Coast Guard, and is in the process of being given to the museum for non-helicopter uses.

(1) Eldred Rock meets the economic criteria of the proximity to services that the Haines town can best provide.

(1) This site is hard to access, and should be used for emergencies only.

Natural Resources:

(1) Wetlands are an issue for marine biology at this site.

Heliport Evaluation Matrix Results			
	No. responses	Average	Median
Proximity to place to warm up & eat	29	2.5	2.0
Nearby land available for commercial development	26	1.7	1.0
Adjacent land use is compatible with light industrial use/ heliport	31	2.6	2.0
Approx. no. properties, and developed properties within 1500' of site (0,0)	5	4.2	4.0
Approx no. properties, and developed properties, within 3000' of site (0,0)	5	4.2	4.0
Estimated frequency (relative) of helicopter flights from this site. 5=very few; 1= very many	17	3.6	5.0
Landowner willing to consider sale, lease or trade to Haines Borough for use as heliport (leave blank if don't know)	1	1.0	1.0
Clear approach and takeoff surfaces	30	4.0	5.0
Has sufficient area for onsite firefighting and rescue	27	2.9	3.0
Rate site compared to existing 33 mile and 18 mile site for relative increase or decrease in flight time	20	2.1	2.0
Relative proximity to heli-destinations	27	2.5	2.0
Road, phone and power availability	28	1.8	1.5
Site contains or is adjacent to anadromous stream	Not an issue		
Site may be wetlands	Not an issue		
Relative impact of helicopters to nearby eagle or important bird habitat	Not an issue		

## Site Specific Comments: (15) Excursion Inlet Fish Processing Facility

- Higher number of developed parcels nearby compared to other sites.

COMMENTS (# of times comment mentioned in parenthesis)

(2) Heliport location at Excursion Inlet is not acceptable.

(1) What do the people in Excursion Inlet say about this?

(1) This is a good site for accessing the Southern Chilkat Range.

Economics:

(2) The increase / decrease in flight time to destinations relative to 33 and 18-mile locations would depend on the destination.

Natural Resources:

(1) There is no threat to anadromous streams at this site.

Heliport Evaluation Matrix Results			
	No. responses	Average	Median
Proximity to place to warm up & eat	24	2.3	2.0
Nearby land available for commercial development	22	2.8	3.0
Adjacent land use is compatible with light industrial use/ heliport	24	2.9	3.0
Approx. no. properties, and developed properties within 1500' of site (34,13)	5	1.4	1.0
Approx no. properties, and developed properties, within 3000' of site (46,19)	5	1.4	1.0
Estimated frequency (relative) of helicopter flights from this site. 5=very few; 1= very many	14	3.1	3.5
Landowner willing to consider sale, lease or trade to Haines Borough for use as heliport (leave blank if don't know)	1	1.0	1.0
Clear approach and takeoff surfaces	22	3.3	4.0
Has sufficient area for onsite firefighting and rescue	20	3.0	3.0
Rate site compared to existing 33 mile and 18 mile site for relative increase or decrease in flight time	17	1.9	1.0
Relative proximity to heli-destinations	21	2.4	2.0
Road, phone and power availability	22	2.3	2.0
Site contains or is adjacent to anadromous stream	Near two important anadromous streams, South Creek supports a run of sockeye salmon important for subsistence use.		
Site may be wetlands	Likely not an issue.		
Relative impact of helicopters to nearby eagle or important bird habitat	Likely not an issue.		

## **Other Locations**

- (1) “Sites near town can be just as profitable to heliski companies if mountains near town are opened to skiing.”
- (1) “Any of the sites in the lower valley could be just as attractive by changing the destinations. Explore other destinations.”
- (2) The Skagway airport should be considered as a potential heliport location.
- (1) “How about considering pulloffs on straight stretch at 35-37-mile, or private owners in that area?”
- (1) Haines needs to support more industry / tourism business. Heliports should be put where they will benefit businesses.
- (1) A heliport near Chilkat Lake Road is inappropriate.



**From:** Shanah Kinison [<mailto:fveventide@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 12, 2015 4:38 PM  
**To:** Julie Cozzi  
**Subject:** Conditional use permits at 36&26 mile

Dear Ms. Cozzi,

Please forward the following letter to the Planning Commissioners for tonight's 6:30 meeting.

Thank you,

Chris Nagy

Dear Haines Borough Planning Commissioners,

This letter is in regards to the Conditional Use Permits proposed at 36 mile and Plat no.2012-6.

I would like to urge the Commission to deny these permits as they do not meet all 8 of the requirements necessary to qualify for the CUP as Borough code dictates.

The property at 36 mile actually makes sense, but that will not necessarily mitigate usage at 33 mile, already an established heliport 3 miles away. I don't know if private heliports from 10 mile to the border is consistent and in harmony with the Comprehensive Plan.

The Developers of Plat No.2012-6 have yet to prove beyond a preponderance of evidence that the requirements have been met, even with help from the Borough on burden of proof, i.e. noise study, the first requirement can't be met. A helicopter taking off and landing in a residential area, with noise levels that of a "National Park", to begin with is always going to cause undue noise and nuisances.

I believe that a heliport next to a neighborhood will certainly effect the value of land, who wants to buy a house in the woods next to a heliport?

The current surrounding land use is that of a neighborhoods, farms, and minimal light industry. A heliport is not in harmony or consistent with current usage.

This dispute over Plat No. 2012-6 becoming a heliport has gone on since 2003, please let's put this issue to bed and say that heliports do not belong in neighborhoods.

I strongly urge The Commission to please deny the Conditional Use Permits.

Thank You for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Chris Nagy  
HC60 Box 2895  
Haines, AK 99827

November 12, 2015

To: Planning Commissioners

Re: Michael Wilson – Heliport Conditional Use Proposal

This letter is an update to my comments of October 15, 2015 (see comments below).

Since the last public hearing on the CUP was held, there has been further communication from the applicant regarding the use of the heliport. There is a discrepancy between the stated use on the application and further communication from the Mike Wilson.

The application states:

“This conditional use permit will allow the Alaska Heli-skiing operation to move from the road side operation among residences at 33 mile to a more private, remote and safer operational area away from existing residences and vehicular traffic.”

However, in a subsequent email to the planning technician, Tracy, the applicant states that the applicant intends to use the heliport year-round.

From: "Mike Wilson" <[haines35lodge@gmail.com](mailto:haines35lodge@gmail.com)>

Date: Oct 30, 2015 2:52 PM

Subject: RE: Planning commission

To: "Xi Cui" <[xcui@haines.ak.us](mailto:xcui@haines.ak.us)>

Cc: "sean dog" <[heliskialaska@gmail.com](mailto:heliskialaska@gmail.com)>

Hi Tracy

Yes please schedule our CUP app for the Nov 12 meeting. I will not be able to attend in person because of corporate meetings here in Juneau all that week. I will make sure Sean goes attends the maating. I should be able to call in.

If the CUP is allowed we will eventually move all operations away from 33 mile. Before we can do that we have to build the infrastructure to support the operations. Before we invest the time and money to build the infrastructure we need to know if we can operate the helicopter there. We do plan to use the helicopter landing area in some capacity spring 2016 but very little. We will eventually plan to use the area year round.

Mike

.....

Haines Borough Code describes the “Manager’s Review Procedure” for a CUP. The manager has approved Mike Wilson’s CUP application as complete and that it “**accurately reflects the developer’s intentions**” in accord with HBC **18.50.030 Application.**

## Chapter 18.50 CONDITIONAL USE

### 18.50.030 Application.

#### D. Manager's Review Procedure.

1. The manager shall determine whether the application is complete **and accurately reflects the developer's intentions**. The manager shall advise the applicant whether or not the application is acceptable, or if it is not, what corrective action may be taken.

~~~~~

There is no justification to have 2 heliports (33 Mile and 35 Mile) 2 miles apart as this would greatly increase the impacts to the neighborhood located between 33 Mile and 35 Mile and nearby residents. There is even less justification to have 2 heliports within 2 miles of each other operating year-round.

The stated use and intentions of the heliport in the application is for helicopter operations during the heli-ski season. If a CUP is granted, this should be a condition of the CUP.

- **Condition 1.** Use of the heliport is limited to the heli-ski season, February 1 to May 3.

There is no description of flight paths for the 35 Mile location in the agreement signed by the heli-ski permittees:

## AGREEMENT REGARDING FLIGHT OPERATIONS AND PRACTICES OF COMMERCIAL SKI TOURS

In order to protect residents from unwanted helicopter traffic near their homes, the flight arrival and departure route from the 33 Mile heliport should be a condition of this CUP, if granted. As a resident at 40 Mile, Haines Highway, this access route to heli-ski terrain will reduce the helicopter noise somewhat at our home.

- **Condition 2.** Unless weather, safety conditions, mechanical difficulties or Federal Aviation Administration requirements dictate otherwise, helicopters using the 35 Mile heliport will follow the access route described below:

Use Porcupine Creek, McKinley Creek or Glacier Creek to access Porcupine Peak and Flower Mountain areas. Avoid Jarvis Creek, and the Klehini River to keep noise away from residences. Access the Mt. Jonathan Ward area from the Porcupine Peak area. Use a route directly behind 35 Mile to access Four Winds area.

~~~~~

In order to reduce the impacts of having two heliports located two miles apart, another condition should be placed on this CUP, if granted.

- **Condition 3:** Heli-ski operations conducted at 35 Mile heliport may not be conducted concurrently with heli-ski operations at 33 Mile heliport.

I am opposed to granting another heliport CUP at the 35 Mile location, however these three conditions would serve to mitigate the impacts somewhat.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Weishahn

~~~~~

October 15, 2015

To: Haines Borough Planning Commission

Re: Mike Wilson's Conditional Use Permit (CUP) request for heliport at 35 Mile, Haines Highway

Hello Planning Commissioners,

In order to prevent a proliferation of private heliports in the General Use Zone, I am opposed to any additional heliports to the current ones in use. Mr. Wilson's application for a heliport CUP is a perfect example of this proliferation since it is located just 2 miles from another heliport at 33 Mile. The Haines Airport is the proper location for aircraft use including helicopters.

That being said, I have several concerns about this particular application for a heliport CUP.

It has come to my attention that the ownership of the parcel west of Mike Wilson's property is in question. According to planning technician, Tracy:

Currently I am not able to find any documentation indicating/confirming the ownership info. (email, 10-13-15)

The manager's discussion of the criteria for issuing a Conditional Use Permit states that:

1. This use is so located on the site as to avoid undue noise and other nuisances and dangers.

The property is one 10.4 acre lot. There are three vacant lots directly adjacent to Wilson's property. The ones immediately to the west and east are state land; the one immediately to the north is also Wilson's property. On 10/05, surrounding property owners within 200 feet were notified. Staff has not received any comments from these property owners. The proposed helipad

is situated on an upper terrace in the middle of the lot as far away from the property line as possible. The nearest residence is located approximate 0.75 mile away.

~~~~~

The manager's statement that the parcel west of the Wilson property is state land is not consistent with land status information available in several public documents. The borough "property info online" and the Haines State Forest Management Plan (Aug. 2002, Map 3-4, Management Unit 3 Klehini River) indicate that the parcel west of Mike Wilson's property is private land. The Haines Comprehensive Plan 2012, Part 2, PDF 91, Figure 7-9, Land Status map, also shows the parcel west of the Wilson property is private land.

Since the ownership of the 'west parcel' has not yet been documented by the borough, the current owner may not have been notified of the proposed heliport and this public hearing. Haines Borough Code, 18.30.020 Public notice, requires that:

C. All property owners within an area of 200 feet from the location of a proposed variance, conditional use or rezoning shall be notified in writing of the application, the date of the hearing thereon, the proposed use or zone, and the fact that further information is available from the manager. Such notification shall be done at least five days prior to the conduct of the hearing.

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In order to satisfy HBC 18.30.020(C), I ask that the Planning Commission postpone this public hearing until adequate documentation of the ownership of the parcel west of the Wilson property is obtained and the owner has been notified by the borough in writing of the Conditional Use Permit application and scheduled public hearing.

The manager's discussion of the criteria for CUPs also states:

4. The specific development scheme of the use is consistent and in harmony with the comprehensive plan and surrounding land uses.

... While the proposed use may not seem to be in harmony with the comprehensive plan, it does appear to be consistent with the surrounding existing commercial use (33 Mile Roadhouse). An area around the 33-mile roadhouse is designated on the Future Growth maps for Commercial development. The goal is overtime to concentrate commercial activity in a few discrete areas rather than having it develop strip-mall style all along the Haines Highway.

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The Wilson property is not located within the area designated "Commercial" on the Haines Borough Comprehensive Plan Future Growth map, Figure 7-10, but is several miles away. While the future growth map is not a zoning designation, it does "signal the Borough's interest in encouraging commercial uses to cluster together..." (Comprehensive Plan, Part 2, PDF 95)

Also, the Comprehensive Plan calls for borough planning to consider a heliport on public land in addition to the airport. This effort would serve to reduce the current trend of private heliport CUP requests.

[excerpt from the Comprehensive Plan, Part 2, PDF 3]:

In 2011 one business proposed development of a heliport on its land on the Chilkat Lake Road, which raised concerns about neighborhood character, noise and safety. The planning commission and assembly denied the permit based on health, safety and welfare issues, but this raised a larger question of whether a heliport on public land should be developed to consolidate helicopter activity. To effectively plan for future heliport use the Borough should work to establish a criteria that clearly defines the public health, safety and welfare issues it desires to address, define the characteristics a suitable site would have such as acceptable noise levels and distance from residences, systematically evaluate possible sites, and if a site is identified and developed, offer incentives (e.g. increased skier days) and disincentives to encourage its use.

The manager's recommends several conditions to the CUP:

Therefore, I [manager] recommend the Planning Commission approve Wilson's conditional use proposal with conditions of (1) conform to the statement set forth in the permit application; and (2) fuel storage will be done in accordance with DEC standards with a fuel spill containment project in place before operation begin.

If a CUP is granted, I suggest the following conditions also be included:

- Use of the heliport is limited to the heli-ski season, February 1 to May 3.
- Unless weather, safety conditions, mechanical difficulties or Federal Aviation Administration requirements dictate otherwise, helicopters using the 35 Mile heliport will follow the access route described below:

Use Porcupine Creek, McKinley Creek or Glacier Creek to access Porcupine Peak and Flower Mountain areas. Avoid Jarvis Creek, and the Klehini River to keep noise away from residences. Access the Mt. Jonathan Ward area from the Porcupine Peak are. Use a route directly behind 35 Mile to access Four Winds area.

- Heli-ski operations conducted at 35 Mile heliport will cease operations at 33 Mile heliport.

These conditions will help protect the public's health, safety and welfare by defining the months of use, describing flight departures and arrivals, and limiting helicopter noise to residents living between the 33 Mile heliport and the proposed 35 Mile heliport. Locating another heliport 2 miles away from 33 Mile is redundant and highlights the problem of issuing CUPs for private

heliports. There is little public benefit from proliferating private heliports and costs to the public good can be high. Care must be taken by decision-makers to limit negative impacts to residents and property owners as much as possible.

If a CUP is issued, I also suggest it be limited to one year so that the public can re-evaluate the heliport after one year of use.

Thank you for considering my comments,

Carolyn Weishahn

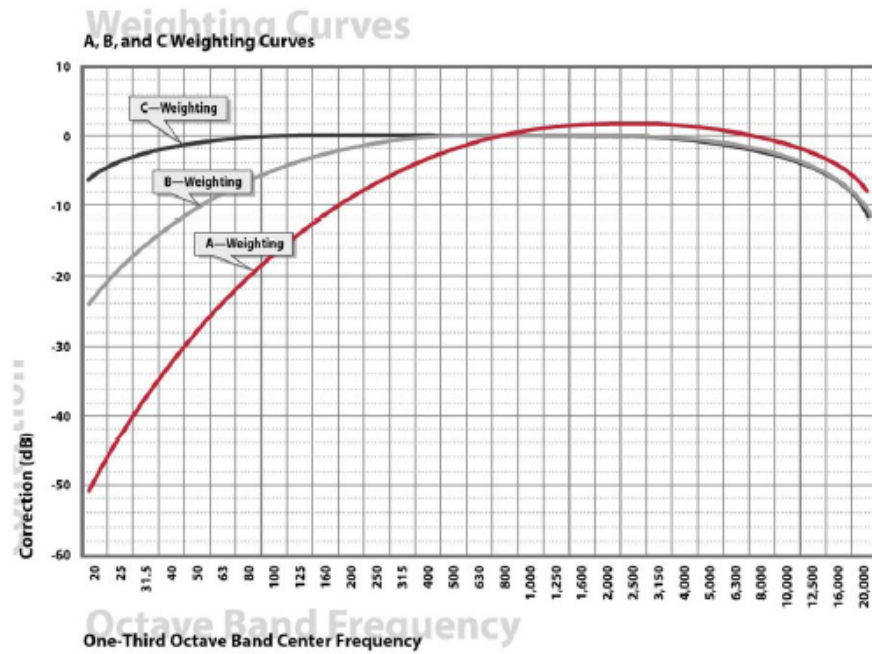
**Planning Commissioners, Assembly members, and other concerned citizens,**

Please study the following two charts, in order to better understand the degree to which A-weighting skews the reporting of helicopter noise, and therefore, the results of the noise study. The first is a chart from Section 2, on page 3 of the Final Draft Haines Noise Study, which shows three options for so-called “weighting” of noise frequencies, the A, B, and C weighting curves. “A-weighting,” on paper, removes as much as 50 decibels of medium and low frequency noise from the actual noise levels.

The second chart is from a 2010 joint FAA/DOT study showing the large quantity of mid- and low-frequency noise generated by helicopters— noise that is entirely or greatly discounted by the methodology used by Mead and Hunt. As you can see by studying the two charts, some of the greatest sound pressure produced by the helicopter’s rotors is at ranges which are dramatically discounted by A-weighting. The chart says that at 1000 feet, the rotors produce about 61.8 decibels in the 25 Hz band, and 81.5 decibels in the 31.5 Hz band. Mead and Hunt have erased these noise bands (on paper) by nearly 40 decibels— that’s a 10,000 times reduction.



Figure 2-1  
**FREQUENCY WEIGHTING CURVES**  
*Borough of Haines Spring 2015 Helicopter Noise Survey*

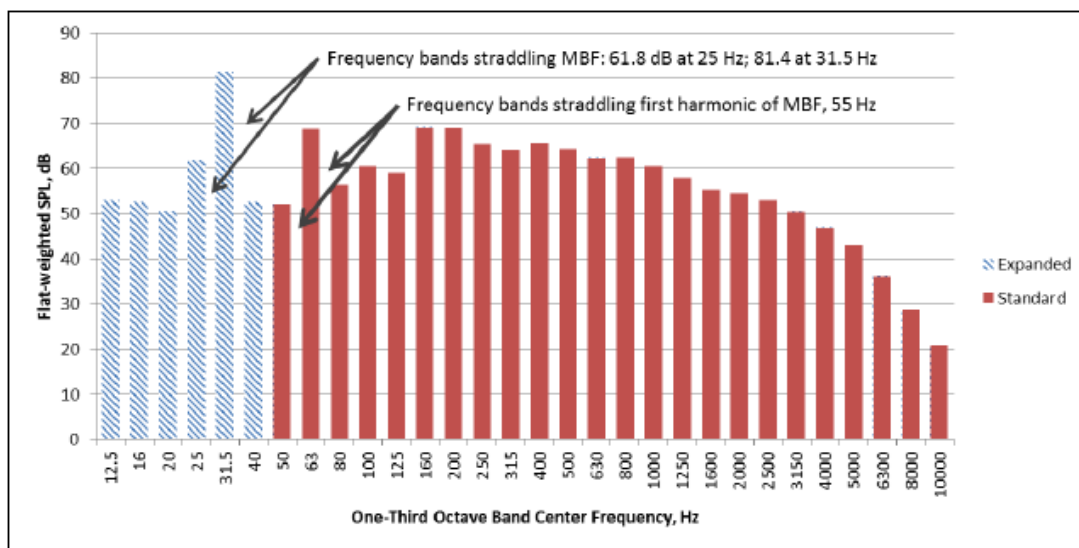


## 7. FIGURES AND TABLES

Table 1. Subject Helicopters

<i>Aircraft</i>	<i>Passenger Capacity (including pilot)</i>	<i>Main Rotor Blade Count</i>	<i>Main Rotor Blade-Pass Frequency (Hz)</i>	<i>Main Rotor RPM</i>	<i>Max. Gross Weight (lb)</i>
Helicopter A	7	4	27.5	412.5	5000
Helicopter B	4	2	13.6	408	2400
Helicopter C	2	3	23.6	472	2050

Figure 1. Helicopter A Departure, Source Normalized to 1,000 Feet



**The loudest sounds produced by helicopters are discounted by A-weighting.** In the above FAA/DOT chart, the noise bands represented in blue are those that are reduced or eliminated by A-weighting. The sound of 440 hertz is the A note just below middle C on a piano—not a particularly low note. It is a note which the typical female vocalist would easily deliver during a song. This is the note below which Mead and Hunt, via A-weighting, have altered the data, falsely reducing the actual sound pressure data. The majority of helicopter noise is widely recognized to occur below this note, in

the lower frequency range. The contract that Mead and Hunt signed with the Haines Borough specified that they would provide “unweighted, ‘raw’ sound data measured in decibels.” That data sits in a file in the borough office, unrepresented in either the draft or the final reports. Without full access to the unaltered numbers, we can only speculate about what the true sound pressure levels were.