United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

DIRECTOR'S ORDER #60: AVIATION MANAGEMENT

Approved: Jonathan B. Jarvis
Director

Effective Date: 7/3/2012

Duration: This Order will remain in effect until amended or rescinded by the Director

This Director's Order replaces the October 28, 2003, edition. Together with Reference Manual 60, it provides policy and procedural guidance on National Park Service aviation activities.

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1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Aviation resources provide land managers with specialized tools to accomplish management objectives efficiently, effectively, and safely when other means are unavailable or less appropriate. However, aviation programs are expensive to conduct, and the potential for catastrophe is high when proper levels of risk management are not applied. Furthermore, aviation activities can have adverse effects on resource values and visitor experiences. For these reasons, a superintendent's decision to conduct an aviation program is significant and subject to management oversight and multiple technical requirements.

The purpose of this Director's Order and its companion Reference Manual 60 (RM-60) is to provide park managers with the direction they need to conduct a legal, safe, and cost-effective aviation program, and to minimize adverse impacts that NPS aviation activities may impose on park resources and visitor enjoyment.

2. APPLICABILITY

2.1 Requirements contained in this Director's Order and RM-60 will apply whenever NPS management has operational control of aircraft. Operational control may exist when one or more of the following conditions exist: (1) an aircraft is ordered by the NPS, (2) the NPS is directing the aircraft, or (3) the NPS is paying for the use of the aircraft.

The NPS does not have operational control for flights when a "seat fare" is used for transportation via a scheduled air carrier, or when flights take place in conjunction with end-product service contracts (i.e., contracts to provide the NPS with a product, such as aerial photos, that will incidentally require the use of an aircraft) or when aviation missions are conducted by a cooperating agency pursuant to a memorandum of understanding issued by the Aviation Management Directorate (AMD) within the Department of the Interior. See RM-60 for further guidance on end-product services.

2.2 All NPS aviation activities and programs will follow the requirements in this Director's Order and RM-60. These activities and programs include, but are not limited to, Aerial Capture, Eradication, and Tagging of Animals (ACETA); Emergency Medical Services; Search and Rescue; Law Enforcement; Maintenance; Resource Management; Fire Management; and all administrative uses.

2.3 This Director's Order authorizes United States Park Police aviation operations to be conducted under the aviation guideline manual approved by the Department of the Interior. Those guidelines provide an alternate method of compliance with NPS and DOI policy.

2.4 The related concepts of preserving natural sound and managing noise are addressed in more detail in Director's Order #47 and its companion Reference Manual 47. Those documents also provide guidance on air tour management planning (or visit the Air Tour Management Planning website at www1.nrintra.nps.gov/naturalsounds/planning/).

2.6 As is the case with all components of the NPS directives system, this Order is intended only to improve the internal management of the NPS, and it is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity by a party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities or entities, its officers or employees, or any other person.

3. AUTHORITIES

Authority to issue this Director's Order is found in 16 U.S.C. 1-4 (1916 National Park Service Organic Act, as amended and supplemented), and delegations of authority in Part 245 of the DOI's Departmental Manual.

Other Federal laws and policies that govern the NPS Aviation Management Program include:

3.1 Federal Statutes

Federal laws have been enacted that affect aviation management in units of the national park system. These laws require that park aviation management plans and specific mission planning consider potential impacts on a full range of resources and values, including but not limited to wildlife, historic and cultural scenes, Native American sacred sites and traditional practices, and wilderness. Specifically, aviation in wilderness has been addressed in the Wilderness Act, which states:

Except as specifically provided for in this chapter, and subject to existing private rights, there shall be no commercial enterprise and no permanent road within any wilderness area designated by this chapter and, except as necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration of the area for the purpose of this chapter (including measures required in emergencies involving the health and safety of persons within the area), there shall be no temporary road, no use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment or motorboats, no landing of aircraft, no other form of mechanical transport, and no structure or installation within any such area. (16 U.S.C. 1133(c))

3.2 Federal Aviation Administration Regulations

Federal Aviation Regulations (FARs) are issued by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and govern DOI pilot and aircraft operations. Exemptions are provided under those authorities for public use aircraft operations, which NPS operates under DOI policy.

3.3 Department of the Interior (DOI) Policy

The DOI Aviation Policy (Departmental Manual, Parts 350-354), which is based upon and supplemental to the FARs, establishes the aviation policy for all DOI agencies. The policy includes roles and responsibilities for the Department's AMD, which supports the DOI Aviation Program in the NPS.

3.4 National Park Service Policy

With regard to administrative use of aviation, section 8.4.4 of NPS *Management Policies 2006* states:

Aviation is a necessary and acceptable management tool in some parks when used in a manner consistent with the NPS mission. Aviation activities will comply with all applicable policies and regulations issued by the Department of the Interior, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the National Park Service. In its administrative use of aircraft, the Service will:

- *use, to the maximum extent practicable, the quietest aircraft available for its aviation operations;*
- *limit official use of flights over parks to those needed to support or carry out emergency operations or essential management activities in cases where there are no practical alternatives or when alternative methods would be unreasonable;*
- *give full consideration to safety; wilderness management implications; impacts on resources, values, and opportunity for visitor enjoyment; impacts on other administrative activities; and overall cost-effectiveness;*
- *plan, schedule, and consolidate flights to avoid or minimize adverse impacts on park resources and values and visitor enjoyment;*
- *work cooperatively with other agencies using aircraft and airspace over parks to adhere to the above standards.*

3.5 Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars

The OMB provides specific procedures on the acquisition or procurement of aircraft and services, and on official use of Government aircraft.

- OMB Circular A-123—Management Accountability and Control
- OMB Circular A-126—Improving the Management and Use of Aircraft
- OMB Exhibit 300—Planning, Budgeting, Acquisition, and Management of Information Technology Capital Assets

4. OPERATIONAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

4.1 General

(a) Aviation Management Directorate Primacy. In general, the Department's AMD, in conjunction with the Department's Aviation Board of Directors (ABOD), sets policies and standards that govern the aviation programs of bureaus within the DOI. Those policies and standards cover such things as aircraft acquisition and maintenance, equipment, crew duty times, and certifications. To ensure a safe, efficient, and cost-effective program, all NPS aviation activities must be conducted in accordance with those policies and standards.

(b) Aviation Management Plan. A superintendent may not authorize aviation activities or services unless there is an approved aviation management plan (AMP) in place. (The use of seat fares in scheduled air transportation is not considered an aviation activity or service for the purposes of the AMP.) An approved park AMP must meet the criteria specified in RM-60 Appendix #2 to ensure that it provides operational direction to park management and staff on how to conduct a cost-effective and safe aviation program. When appropriate, AMPs will include implementation of maintenance standards, security of equipment, and management of fueling systems. The AMP must meet resource and visitor management objectives and otherwise be in accordance with law and policy.

(c) Evaluation. Aviation programs will be evaluated to ensure compliance with NPS and DOI policy. Safety will be a main emphasis in these evaluations. Procedures for evaluations will be outlined in RM-60. Other agencies with a regulatory role in aviation safety may also conduct inspections of various components of an aviation program, with or without previous notice (i.e., FAA Ramp Checks).

4.2 Personnel

(a) Certification and Training. All aviation programs must ensure compliance with certification and training requirements for aviation personnel as defined in RM-60. These requirements apply to pilots, aviation program managers, helicopter managers, crewmembers, mission specialists, contracting officers, and in certain cases, passengers, regardless of aircraft ownership or employment status of pilot or crew.

(b) Special Recognition and Compensation. Pilots, crewmembers, and other employees in the NPS may be submitted for special recognition through the DOI or NPS Aviation Safety Award Program. Criteria and categories can be found in RM-60. Additional monetary compensation for duties that qualify for hazard pay, premium pay, etc., will follow established procedures in 5 U.S.C. 5545 (c)(1) and (2); 5 U.S.C. 5545 (d); 5 CFR 550.903; and 5 CFR 532.511.

4.3 Safety

(a) Personal Safety. Personal safety is of primary importance and will not be compromised for any reason. The pilot or flight manager may terminate the mission flight, or a passenger may elect not to fly on any flight, and aviation managers may suspend aviation operations at any time based on safety concerns.

(b) Personal Protective Equipment and Training for Special-Use Flights. Managers are responsible for ensuring that all employees involved in aviation activities meet the appropriate level of training and experience standards. PPE will be correctly utilized for all special-use activities (such as search and rescue, animal capture, and rappel operations). The minimum specialized aircraft safety equipment and PPE are contained in RM-60. Park aviation

management plans may prescribe more stringent requirements for the use of PPE than required by RM-60. The NPS will provide all required PPE for special-use flights for Government employees.

(c) Aviation Mishaps. Aviation mishap reporting is a key element of the department's aviation accident prevention program. NPS employees will ensure that all aviation mishaps, including those involving military aircraft and ground support personnel, are reported in accordance with DOI requirements. Aviation mishaps may range from minor incidents with no injury or property damage to major accidents, such as an aircraft crash with fatalities.

4.4 Passengers

(a) Official Passengers. On aircraft within NPS operational control, official passengers will be permitted only in accordance with DOI regulations. As Part 350, Section 1.8A of the Departmental Manual stipulates, official passengers include:

- Officers and employees of the Federal Government traveling on official business;
- Members of Congress and employees of Congressional committee staffs whose work relates to DOI programs;
- Non-Federal passengers when engaged in missions that enhance accomplishment of a Departmental program (for example—personnel of cooperating State, county, or local agencies; representatives of foreign governments; contractors' representatives, to include those employed by such agencies; and private citizens);
- Space-available passengers authorized and approved in accordance with OMB Circular A-126;
- Space-available travelers approved by the Secretary of the Interior on a trip-by-trip basis.

(b) Required Approvals. In accordance with OMB Circular A-126 and the Department of the Interior's Departmental Manual, Senior Executive Service (SES) and employees above GM-15 grade level must have Departmental Solicitor's approval for point-to-point flights. Consult the appropriate Regional Aviation Manager prior to flights with non-scheduled airlines.

4.5 Environmental Considerations

(a) Minimum Impact. Noise abatement is a key consideration in park aviation activities. Existing fleet and vendor aircraft will be operated in a manner to minimize audible and visual impacts to park resources and visitor experience. Technological and operational technique advances will be evaluated and, if found to be appropriate, employed. Superintendents must also evaluate the establishment of flight corridors and other protocols governing administrative use of aircraft. (See NPS Natural Sounds Program website at http://www1.nrintra.nps.gov/naturalsounds/.)

(b) Wilderness Use. A superintendent may allow aircraft use in wilderness if its use meets the "Minimum Requirements" of section 6.3.5 of *Management Policies 2006* to achieve the purposes of the area as wilderness or to deal with emergency situations.

(c) Facility Construction. Aviation facilities such as hangars, runways, heliports, and aircraft fueling systems require special consideration. Before constructing such facilities, managers will consult appropriate technical specialists within the NPS and the AMD and refer to standards contained in associated Departmental handbooks.

4.6 Aircraft Acquisition and Disposition

(a) Acquisition of Aircraft Services. When a superintendent has determined that aircraft services are needed, a decision must be made as to how the services will be acquired. With the

assistance of the regional and national aviation managers, the superintendent will conduct a needs analysis that considers factors such as flight missions, types of aircraft needed, and level of anticipated need. Additional guidance will be available in RM-60.

(b) Acquisition Methods. There are several methods of procuring aircraft services. Regardless of the method selected, superintendents must consider safety, cost effectiveness, mission, quiet technology, and a variety of other issues. Refer to RM-60, the appropriate park/regional aviation manager, or applicable Departmental instructions.

(c) Disposition of Aircraft. The superintendent determines when an aircraft is no longer useful to the park. The Department's AMD is responsible for disposing of aircraft, with bureau input in accordance with applicable Departmental instructions.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

The NPS is solely responsible for managing its aviation program. NPS program management will consist of aviation managers at the national, regional, and, in some cases, the park level, who will serve as points of contact for the park superintendent. The NPS Director is ultimately responsible for establishment of aviation policy and ensuring its implementation and oversight. The Director also reserves authority to disapprove the acquisition of other than quiet-technology fleet aircraft.

5.1 The Associate Director, Visitor and Resource Protection (AD-VRP) is delegated operational responsibility for implementation of the NPS aviation operation and safety program, and is responsible for:

- The issuance of RM-60; and
- Serving as a member of the Department's Aviation Board of Directors.

5.2 Regional Directors are responsible for ensuring a safe and efficient aviation program exists in their region. Regional directors:

- Ensure that all aviation activities are assessed for risk;
- Support and disseminate aviation policies and information;
- Ensure that aviation training is in compliance with requirements and that proper equipment is utilized;
- Ensure availability of aviation expertise to field managers who are responsible for aircraft operations;
- Assign a liaison to aviation accident investigation teams;
- Promote and support the Aviation Mishap Information System;
- Participate in, or assign a senior line officer from the region to participate in, an Aircraft Mishap Review Board for incidents occurring within their region; and
- Responsible for the development of a comprehensive park Aviation Program Review process.

5.3 Superintendents/Park Managers will ensure that conservative decision-making and risk assessment are used in determining the appropriateness of using aviation resources. Superintendents are responsible for all NPS flight operations conducted in their park units and must ensure that:

- Aviation activities are conducted in compliance with applicable policies/directives and the Park Aviation Management Plan;
- A Park Aviation Manager (PAM) is designated;

- Employee and public safety is considered foremost for all aviation activities, but full consideration is also given to resource and visitor impacts;
- The Aviation Management Plan is developed and approved, in consultation with the RAM;
- Adequate funding exists to support the level of aviation activity at the park;
- Aviation activities are conducted in compliance with applicable policy/directives;
- Options, such as the incorporation of quiet technology aircraft and the establishment of flight corridors and other protocols governing administrative use of aircraft, are evaluated and used when appropriate;
- The Aviation Mishap Information System is promoted;
- Appropriate aviation training is completed;
- Safety hazards are mitigated, and flight following is accomplished;
- Aviation Life Safety Equipment requirements are followed;
- Records related to the aviation program are maintained;
- Significant operational problems are reported to the RAM; and
- Aviation resources are procured, managed, and operated within the scope of the contract.

5.4 The DOI Perspective. A summary of NPS and other DOI bureau responsibilities with respect to the DOI Aviation Management Program is listed in Part 350, Chapter 1, Appendix 3 of the Departmental Manual.

-----End of Director's Order #60-----