

Friends of Liberty State Park media release and summary statement on National Park Service and FAA minorly revised signed final tourist helicopter flight path, still over LSP and the loud noise barrage harming all LSP users

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The Friends of LSP condemns the National Park Service's unconscionable signing of final flight path agreements with tourist helicopter companies. The flight path should not go over any portion of LSP!

The slightly revised flight path with its LSP "avoidance area" is meaningless as it mostly moves the flight path to the western side of Freedom Way but it will still severely impact the quality of life experience of all LSP users due to the tourist helicopters' extreme loudness. LSP is a priceless mental, physical and spiritual urban public health resource behind Lady Liberty

This final agreement with the powerful tourist helicopter industry is a LSP users-be-damned agreement for their profits. The extremely loud noise footprint of the greedy tourist helicopters doesn't belong directly over LSP or in close proximity to LSP.

No one using LSP will be able to avoid the flight path's constant loud noise barrage whether they are in the "avoidance area" or outside that area. The NPS's decision is an assault on all urban residents who use LSP and all other park users from around NJ and visitors who extensively used LSP as from everywhere.

Park users' peaceful use of LSP will still be negatively impacted as the flight path will remain close to LSP's entire waterfront area east of Freedom Way, and will pass over the southeast and northeast ends of the park. The final agreement also has no cap or reduction in the current number of helicopter sightseeing flights.

We hope that our New Jersey federal officials will block the implementation of these "voluntary" agreements with the tourist helicopter companies until flights are banned over all of LSP.

The NPS ignored 2,263 public comments strongly and clearly opposing any flight path going over LSP. This opposition came from Jersey City residents and from park users around NJ; NYC residents opposing the Governors Island flight route's impact on residential neighborhoods; several NJ groups and Stop the Chop NY/NJ; and elected officials, including former Congressman Albio Sires and his successor, Congressman Rob Menendez, from Jersey City, and Jersey City Mayor Steven Fulop. Resolutions opposing a flight path over LSP were passed by Jersey City Council and Hudson County Commissioners.

The tourist helicopters' flight path privatizes the sky and sacrifices LSP users coming to this local and national treasure park by still having the flight paths directly over this popular and vital oasis, jam-packed on all nice weekends.

Park users will be impacted by the all-day helicopter flights while they are inside the flight path's "avoidance area":

- using the park's southeast corner at the southern end of Liberty Walk, where the route begins to go over parkland. The flight path will be right next to LSP's popular and sacred overlook South Lawn – where local residents relax and play and people from everywhere visit to take in one of the most dramatic views in the world, toward Lady Liberty, Ellis Island, NYC, the bay and river, and the Verrazano Bridge;
- using LSP's main picnic tables and BBQ area, adjacent to the South Lawn.
- using the entire "Green Park's" 88 acres between Freedom Way and Liberty Walk - about 500 feet from the flight path west of Freedom Way - where people engage in a multitude of uses and includes large playground and adjacent picnic area and there's a planned active recreation area of 4.5 acres in the Green Park.
- attending the festivals in that waterfront 88 acres in the "Green Ring" and which extend outside the "Green Ring";
- attending events in the North Cove Field between the North Cove and ferry parking lot at LSP's northside, where there are free and admission fee festivals, summer Sunday free concerts, and start/finish and speeches/vendors area for many 5K charity Runs and Walks; and,
- walking, running and bicycling and those relaxing doing choose-up games in the 88 acre Green Park between the Freedom Way sidewalk and the waterfront Liberty Walk.

Also, the new flight path which is outside the "avoidance area" would go directly over crowded and treasured areas of the park such as

- LSP's southside Freedom Field's two very popular Group Picnic Pavilions in Freedom Field (just west of the southern end of Freedom Way). Within a couple of weeks in January, weekends get fully booked from Memorial Day to Labor Day and by the end of April, the two pavilions get fully booked from May 1 to Oct. 1.
- the picnic grove of trees between parking lots 2 and 3 on the south side of LSP
- the sacred Grove of Remembrance immediately next to Zapp Drive with 740 trees planted in memory of NJ residents killed on 9/11
- the sacred Empty Sky Memorial at the park's northeast corner
- "Millennium Park" 6 passive recreation acres to the east of the Grove of Remembrance
- flying over the 1889 CRRNJ Terminal next to Empty Sky (film/tv shoots happen there); and,
- the North Field on the northeastern section of the park, between the Empty Sky Memorial and the two park restaurants. As one example, the North Field is a place of relaxing and blanket picnicking and is also reserved by groups such as the group which had over 15,000 people attend the Juneteenth festival in 2021, corporate and other events, etc.

Lastly, it allows helicopters hover go over almost all of **LSP's soon to be restored 215 acre interior**, for which the DEP is well-along in planning a 165-acre area for diverse, peaceful, and spectacular nature habitats, miles of peaceful paths, and 50 acres of active recreation (and there will also be 11-acres of active recreation outside the interior, aimed at local schools but reservable by groups). The 215 acres are fenced off now while awaiting the funded remediation and nature restoration creation, but when completed it will be one of the largest and most dramatic urban natural areas in the world for urban residents and eco-tourists from everywhere.