

Friends of Liberty State Park op-ed opposition statement to National Park Service and FAA plan for Tourist Helicopters' flight path directly over LSP

The National Park Service (NPS) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) have launched a Devastating Loud Helicopter Noise Barrage War on LSP users by its unconscionable, unacceptable and ruinous Draft Agreement approving tourist helicopters new flight path directly over LSP, and the rest of its flight path much closer to the Park. Helicopters are already inescapably intrusive into people's quality of life enjoyment of LSP.

The flight path will severely harm urban people's right to enjoy a peaceful experience at LSP, a mental, emotional and physical health public resource. This is also a Homeland Security issue and environmental justice issue with tourist helicopters flying over a popular urban park, heavily used on all nice weekends by people of densely populated Jersey City and Hudson County.

Over 5 million people a year from our region and our state come to enjoy this great park. We urge all who care about LSP to submit a brief opposition statement to the NPS against this insane, destructive plan with the Public Comment Submission Form period ending on Nov. 21 at 11:59pm. The link is <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/commentForm.cfm?documentID=124250>

This devastating "LSP users-be-damned" plan must be killed by park supporters and by the advocacy by our Senators Bob Menendez and Cory Booker and Congressmen Albio Sires, Donald Payne, Jr. and Bill Pascrell to protect our use of this sacred and priceless public land.

The great diversity of urban people from this crowded, concrete city and county come to our urban backyard to escape noise and stress and to enjoy a free scarce urban open space park to relax, play, exercise enjoy nature, recreation and dramatic views, to celebrate holidays, hold 5K fundraisers, and engage in free and admission-fee special events.

Helicopter noise will invade the use by people of all ages for picnics, barbecues, playgrounds, walking, running, biking, taking in nature's beauty and the priceless Caven Point wildlife habitat sanctuary We benefit from free passive and unstructured recreation, and the DEP's plans include 61 acres of free structured active recreation and 165 acres of interior diverse habitats and trails.

Also negatively affected by every day loud helicopter flights will be LSP permanent and seasonal employees, especially those who work in the maintenance department.

The NPS and FAA want a 1000-foot helicopter flight buffer for Liberty Island and Ellis Island tourists standing in a line; but shifting the flight path will be at the expense of the Public Good of those engaging in outdoor LSP activities, whereas tourists on those federal islands spend most of their time inside a museum or inside the Statue.

LSP is also "America's Park". It opened on Flag Day, 1976 as New Jersey's Bicentennial gift to our nation, and former state senate majority leader Bernard Kenny, Jr. stated that LSP is the second most sacred public land in our nation next to the Gettysburg Battlefield. A Liberty Island Superintendent once declared that there can be no better neighbor to Lady Liberty than a free and green park. Two-thirds of Ellis Island's "processed" immigrants went next to LSP's state and national landmark CRRNJ Terminal to start their American journey.

This NPS/FAA draft agreement written with only the powerful special interest helicopter tourism companies at the table doesn't address the root issue of too many tourists helicopters every day including the tourist and commuter helicopters which fly daily over JC neighborhoods from Kearny airport and no real way to lessen their noise unless there are laws to reduce or ban non-essential helicopters.

The NYC-based non-profit "Stop the Chop NY/NJ" is continuing their longtime advocacy against non-essential helicopters by also opposing this plan with its negative impacts on lower Manhattan and nearby Brooklyn residents due to the other draft flight path 1000 feet from Governors Island.

Please use your voice to once again stand up for LSP, devastatingly threatened by the NPS and the powerful tourist helicopter lobby. Urban park users and all who visit LSP will suffer from the deafening, intensely loud noise assault from this flight path, which privatizes the sky over LSP for private tourist helicopter companies' profits.

Sam Pesin, president of The Friends of LSP