

LETTER TO THE ESTERO COMMUNITIES

ON STATUS OF TALKS WITH THE FAA CONCERNING FLIGHTS OVER ESTERO

In October of 2008 the FAA instituted The Florida West Coast Airspace Redesign (FLOWCAR) which impacted the arrival routes into Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW). This change was made by the FAA in order to accommodate the increasing number of flights into our airport now and in the future.

As a result of this change aircraft began flying over the Estero area causing many residents to be upset by the noise they create as they descend into RSW. As a result of citizen complaints to Estero community leaders, The South Lee County Airplane Noise Committee was formed. The committee, composed of former commercial airline pilots and aviation professionals met with local airport officials and eventually with FAA officials responsible for RSW airspace based at FAA regional headquarters in Atlanta.

The Committee met with the FAA numerous times over the last year to discuss how the noise created by the approaching planes could be eliminated or very substantially reduced. The FAA assigned flight planning professionals to the project and conducted meetings with air traffic controllers to explore possible solutions.

The Committee proposed alternatives that it believes would solve our problem without imposing additional burdens on other communities. Unfortunately, the FAA has said that these proposals have merit but would not work all the time and thus could not be implemented on a full time basis.

Our discussions have not persuaded the FAA to reroute all flights now coming over the Estero area. However, the FAA has made some changes that have improved our situation. In addition, the FAA has assured us that they will continue to work with us to find additional changes that will help improve our situation but do not cause safety or noise problems for other communities.

Some of the steps that the FAA has taken that are providing some relief for the residents of Estero and north Bonita Springs include:

- 1) Increasing the altitude of aircraft on the westbound arrival route from 3,000 feet to 4,000 feet over all Estero communities.

- 2) As the aircraft travel west over Estero they will continue further over the Gulf so that they turn north over water west of Ft. Myers Beach rather than flying over Estero Bay or other populated areas.
- 3) Arriving aircraft must fly the published arrival route and may not turn "early" over populated areas to the airport unless traffic and/or weather conditions are present that require deviation from the published procedure. Early turns must be approved by tower supervisors and must be documented in the tower's log.
- 4) Rerouting some traffic arriving from the northeast so that the aircraft can land to the southwest when the wind is not strong enough out of the east to require the planes to fly over Estero and land to the northeast. These flights will not overfly the Estero area.
- 5) Rerouting some traffic arriving from the northeast north of the airport where it continues down the coast and lands to the northeast as flights from the Midwest continue to land, thus avoiding the Estero area. This is and will be done when traffic permits.
- 6) The FAA has agreed to provide traffic analysis information on all arriving aircraft on a regular basis so that we can evaluate how the changes are working.
- 7) The Committee has been encouraged by the FAA to recommend some Estero representatives to participate in the Noise Compatibility Study (Part 150 study) required prior to the construction of the planned second runway at Southwest Florida Regional Airport, We have been assured by the Airport that our committee members will be fully involved.
- 8) The FAA has communicated to the Airport Authority the Committee's request that they install an aircraft flight tracker program that citizens throughout the region can use to identify incoming aircraft that cause noise or other problems.
- 9) The FAA has agreed to continue its dialogue with the Committee in order to explore other changes that will further reduce the impact of these approaching aircraft on our community.

In summary, while the Committee is not fully satisfied with the improvements it has been able to achieve to date, it is encouraged by the FAA actions taken to reduce the impact of the October 2008 route changes upon the residents of Estero.

We will continue to work with the FAA in an effort to further alleviate the negative impact of the new air traffic over Estero.

**Respectfully Submitted,
South Lee County Airplane Noise Committee**

