

# Prevent low-level flying: stay involved

Franklin County residents are applauded for doing what they do best – staying on top of the issues and sticking together to preserve that which keeps you here: peaceful, safe communities, genuine people who look out for each other when times get tough and of course, the county's natural resources.

The postponement of the Sept. 2 Air National Guard public hearing, according to some, initially appeared as an evasive step by the Guard to avoid criticism of its so-called draft Environmental Impact Study. The study was to address the impact of the proposal to lower minimum altitude requirements for test flights in Western Maine and surround-

ing areas.

The postponement of the hearing, however, actually is the result of concerned voices throughout Franklin County urging state officials to question the draft and demand more information be gathered to address the concerns many people have. Instead, the 172 page draft study is a reiteration of the plan, peppered with weak assurances that the proposal won't have any "significant impact".

More specifically, the draft specifies the "proposed action would have no adverse effect to recreation, natural resources or the Appalachian Trail and would not contribute to significant cumulative

effects on land use... or on the tourism industry; nor would it produce any significant noise, health or safety impacts".

Really? These statements alone are enough to make anyone question how serious the drafters of the study were in responding to initial and ongoing concerns.

Yes, we support the Air National Guard and appreciate the public safety service it provides; and yes, we want our pilots to be properly trained. However, there are alternative locations low-flight training can effectively occur - including locations where fewer people live and less impact is expected.

This is why I urge you to continue sharing your concerns. Such action has already resulted in a letter from the Governor to

the Guard requesting further work on the draft plan – the result of which was the postponement of Wednesday's hearing. So far, so good; But don't stop there. Others need to get involved. Contact your state and federal representatives and let them know you are serious about preserving what is best about Western Maine. Let them know that that what those from away (or overhead) may consider "insignificant" may actually be colossal in terms of changing our everyday lives. The draft study can be found on the Maine Department of Transportation's website at [www.maine.gov/mdot/angconductor/docs.htm](http://www.maine.gov/mdot/angconductor/docs.htm).

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Guest  
Column

By Ann Woloson