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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wainscott, NY (April 29, 2015) –Quiet Skies Coalition has learned that the so-called “Friends of East Hampton Airport” (FOEHA) have filed in federal court for a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) to prevent the Town of East Hampton from implementing duly adopted access restrictions to protect the public from aircraft noise this season, until the two suits the ‘Friends’ have filed against the Town and the FAA have been decided. Such measures were expected.

However, unexpected, and alarming, is the FAA’s decision to support the TRO, which suggests that agency’s unwillingness to defend its 1998 court sanctioned settlement agreement with the Committee to Stop Airport Expansion (CSAE), the foundation for the Town’s newly adopted airport access limits to protect the public from noise. That settlement rolled back four FAA grant assurances and legally restored the Town’s proprietary rights at the close of 2014 and therefore is fundamental to the Town’s plans to mitigate disturbing aircraft noise impacts for East End residents this season. If the FAA is unwilling to defend its 1998 settlement agreement, it would not only be reneging on a federal court sanctioned contract, but it would violate assurances that the FAA itself gave to former Congressman Tim Bishop on the matter. Also, it would fly in the face of the request that Congressman Lee Zeldin recently made to the FAA that they reaffirm the Bishop assurance.

If that contract is nullified, the Town’s noise limits cannot be imposed. QSC Chair, Kathleen Cunningham said, “This is a big government agency reneging on its contract and bullying the little guy! The East Hampton Town Board has adopted policy to protect the health, welfare and safety of the residents of the Town of East Hampton, as well as residents all over the East End of Long Island, as is its right and responsibility. The Board worked in a transparent and comprehensive way, which led to the adoption of policy to protect the public from the adverse health, environmental and economic impacts of aircraft noise, while supporting a safely maintained, recreational airport. To go back to try to undo the foundation of these policies is the worst sort of big government interference. And, for whom? Some out of state helicopter companies that are unhappy that they cannot have 24/7/365 access to our community.”

Former Town Councilman/airport liaison, CSAE and QSC member, Pat Trunzo, III, commented, “The court sanctioned the settlement agreement in favor of the Committee to Stop Airport Expansion (CSAE) because it was the right thing to do to remedy a previous administration’s fraudulent representations to obtain the FAA grant for the apron paving project. The Friends are trying to compel the FAA to go back and negate the settlement now that the Town is rightfully and lawfully acting as airport proprietor because they don’t want any limits on their ability to make planeloads of money at our expense.”

Just last month, newly elected Congressman Lee Zeldin wrote to the FAA calling upon the agency to stand by its assurances to the Congressman’s predecessor Tim Bishop that it would not interfere with the Town’s plans to reinstate their proprietary rights. In 2012, in a letter to then-Congressman Bishop, the FAA agreed, that if the Town of East Hampton wished to remain FAA grant free, it could impose access restrictions as ensured by its legal right as airport proprietor, as of the date the applicable grant assurances expired, 31 December 2014, the cornerstone of the settlement contract they made with CSAE.

Congressman Zeldin is also the newly appointed Congressional Vice Chair of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Subcommittee on Aviation. In his 2 March 2015 letter to FAA Administrator, Michael Huerta, Mr. Zeldin stated, "Long Island's East End is one of the nations' most scenic destinations, and as we rapidly approach another high season for the tourism economy, the people of these communities urgently need a set of effective solutions that will mitigate excessive noise from helicopters approaching the region. My constituents cannot afford to have another season ruined by disruptive noise."

Aircraft noise impacts and emissions are serious and diverse and threaten not only human health, including that of children's ability to learn, as well as diminishing populations of endangered species whose nesting grounds are under the flyways of these craft, but the devaluation of cherished homes and open space.

"As a third-party beneficiary of the settlement contract that has relied on the expiration of the key grant assurances, the East Hampton Town Board must support the CSAE in upholding that contract which is the very foundation of their aircraft noise policy. This is about home rule and whether the duly elected officials of a community can manage a publicly owned facility as they see fit. The FAA has no business deciding what time and when our airport should be open and what kind of aircraft may access it. It also has no business renegeing on a court-sanctioned contract. This is our town, this is our airport," concluded Cunningham.

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