

## **Stop This Madness**

Sag Harbor

September 8, 2011

To the Editor,

A visit to East Hampton Airport at the end of August opened my eyes to the big changes that have gone on there in recent years. The charming graphic on the sign at the entrance is an image from another age, having little to do with the ultramodern jets and helicopters now using the airport.

Once very small, servicing local residents with single-engine planes, the airport no longer has sufficient parking even for cars. On Thursday, Sept. 1, the parking lot was full and cars were parked on the entry road leading into the property, all the way to the terminal. Huge jets and helicopters were parked on the tarmac near the terminal, and smaller planes and seaplanes were crammed between hangars or sheds. Several large jets and a number of small ones roared over me as I watched helicopters and seaplanes coming or going.

East Hampton Airport is not a good neighbor, it is hyperactive from spring through fall, and commercial operators and fliers using it do not give a hoot about residents suffering the pollution caused by their flight paths. Aircraft emit known (benzene, 1,3-butadiene) or probable (formaldehyde) human carcinogens and deposit them right over our backyards!

Scientists from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Environmental Protection Agency, and Cornell University, among others, have long studied possible effects of aircraft emissions on human health. Evidence now exists that there are many human health issues resulting from jet fuel emissions, such as those concluded in the final Report of the Environmental Protection Agency document PA420-R-99-013 on health and pollutants. These include ozone's "lung function impairment, effects on exercise performance, increased airway responsiveness, increased susceptibility to respiratory infection, increased hospital admissions and emergency room visits, pulmonary inflammation and lung structure damage." Carbon monoxide's cardiovascular effects and nitrogen oxides' "lung irritation and lower resistance to respiratory infections, premature mortality, aggravation of respiratory and cardiovascular disease, changes in lung function and increased respiratory symptoms, changes to lung tissues and structure, and altered respiratory defense mechanisms." Asthmatics are especially sensitive. The time to stop this madness is now. The upcoming elections for town board members in East

Hampton are vitally important. Unless board members focus on the safety and well-being of their constituents and the environment in which we live, they may vote to accept a new agreement with the Federal Aviation Administration when the current agreement expires in December 2014.

If East Hampton Town accepts as little as \$1 from the F.A.A., residents' ability to bring about changes in number or type of aircraft using the airport will cease for 20 years. With F.A.A. approval, East Hampton Airport can continue to operate 24/7 and permit takeoff and landing of any aircraft able to be accommodated on its runways — at any hour, day or night. And if expansion plans proceed with F.A.A. funding, larger planes than those now using the airport could fly in and out at whim, weather permitting.

PATRICIA CURRIE