

The Only Solution

East Hampton

November 18, 2011

Dear Editor:

The Northwest Alliance has, since 1981, been working to preserve and protect the natural environment in the area of Northwest Creek. It is the second largest preserved area in East Hampton and its preservation came at a cost of more than 10 million pre-community preservation fund dollars.

We have, for several years, actively opposed the policy that directs almost all of the incoming helicopter traffic directly over this very sensitive area that is home to endangered and threatened species. We fought for the introduction of a control tower to assure that altitude guidelines would be more strictly adhered to. Unfortunately, we have since discovered that pilots are currently complying with altitude requirements about 80 percent of the time, so we must accept that a control tower will be of little benefit to our area.

We also fought to have a southern route over the Atlantic and Georgica Pond to take some of the traffic away from our area. We realize, however, that while we feel strongly that traffic levels must be greatly reduced in our area, it is certainly not fair to the wildlife or the people in that area to foist our suffering onto them.

We have concluded that the only solution that will meaningfully address our concerns is one that actually reduces airport noise pollution in East Hampton and prevents its expansion in the future. After some investigation, it has become clear that reductions in traffic will only be possible if we are relieved of the relevant “grant assurances” that come with the acceptance of Federal Aviation Administration funding.

There are conflicting arguments as to what extent local control will become possible if we allow those assurances to lapse in 2014, but there is no disagreement that if F.A.A. funding is again accepted that the only redress we will have will be through a control tower and rerouting. As we've concluded above that neither of these methods offers an effective response to the noise pollution problem, we must urge the Town of East Hampton, in the strongest possible terms, to reject the proposal to accept further F.A.A. funding for the airport.

We strongly support developing a positive relationship with the F.A.A., but we feel that doing so only becomes possible if both the agency and our airport are no longer bound by the open-access rule that comes with grant assurances.

Regardless of any financial implications of this airport policy issue, it is unacceptable to us that the town board would foreclose on our only opportunity to reduce air traffic and its intolerable pollution in our area and in our town. We will resist any such initiative at all costs.

Sincerely,

Angela Bernet Ortenzio

VINCENT COVELLO

ADELAIDE DE MENIL

CAROL MANDEL

T. JAMES MATTHEWS

JANET SCHNEIDER

Northwest Alliance Helicopter Committee