

May 2001

# FRIENDS of AVIATION

*Finding Common Ground*

## Summer 2001: What You Can Expect From Flightseeing

**F**riends of Aviation and Juneau's flightseeing operators are happy to provide the Juneau community with this update on what you can expect from the flightseeing operators this visitor season. In this issue, the five flightseeing operations are profiled to provide specific information on each company, its visitor focus, the routes and altitudes flown, and the hours of operations. We hope this information helps you understand the "who, what, when, where and why" of flightseeing in Juneau.

Throughout the winter we have worked together to adjust routes and to address noise concerns raised by some members of the community. We appreciate the support we have received and welcome your comments and questions as we work together to find common ground.

### **TEMSCO Helicopters, Inc.**

TEMSCO Helicopters, Inc., is located at the Juneau International Airport. Andy Thomas is Base Manager. The company began permitted tours at its present Juneau location in 1984. The TEMSCO helicopters are red and white with black trim.

TEMSCO employs about 25 Juneau residents throughout the year, and has a staff of 90 in the summer.

"Not counting our pilots and mechanics, about 95 to 98 percent of our employees are local," said Thomas. "Because flightseeing operations are seasonal, about one-third of our pilots are local."

TEMSCO flies the Eurocopter AS 350, also known as the Astar. "The Astar

helicopter is bigger – you can fit six passengers – so that reduces the number of takeoffs." The Astar also has better visibility for passengers and is a quieter aircraft than the smaller helicopters.

In addition, TEMSCO has received FAA approval to modify the Astar to allow for re-circulation of fuel and oil. "The aircraft is very clean and this modification assures that there are no drips of fuel or oil anywhere," Thomas said.

TEMSCO offers three separate visitor tours: the 55-minute Mendenhall Glacier Tour, in which passengers spend about 25 minutes on the ice; the Pilot's Choice Tour, which lasts one hour and a half and lands twice, with passengers spending a total of 40 minutes on two different glaciers on the Juneau Icefield.



**TEMSCO Helicopters, Inc.**

"This tour is very customized and dependent on weather conditions, ice conditions and the passengers' capacities," said Thomas.

Their third tour is the Ice Hiking Tour on the Mendenhall Glacier. Passengers hike on the glacier for either two hours or

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four hours, depending on the tour.

"All our tours concentrate on the beauty and sheer magnificence of the Juneau icefield and its surrounding areas. No matter how you try to describe it, it's a sensation that will change the way anyone views sightseeing – it's indescribable," Thomas said. "There is nothing like viewing the ancient ice, the vast emerald ocean, and the huge stands of lush spruce and hemlock from a helicopter."

TEMSCO tours land on the Mendenhall Glacier, the Herbert Glacier, the Gilkey Glacier, the Taku Glacier, the Norris Glacier, the Nugget Glacier, and the Lemon Glacier and on top of the

what to avoid and how to reduce impacts, how to follow the 'Fly Neighborly' Program, the Voluntary Best Management Practices, the 'Flightseeing/Wildlife Viewing Guidelines' Program, while maintaining safety."

#### **Routes and altitudes**

There is one route that is only used by TEMSCO, which goes up over Heintzelman Ridge, up to Thunder Mountain. TEMSCO flights take off from the airport, cross Egan Drive and go up over Fred Meyer.

"That flight has about one minute of a one-hour tour over areas with people. Starting this summer, we will try to have all three of our tours use that route to

#### **NorthStar Trekking**

NorthStar Trekking operates from the Juneau International Airport. Bob Engelbrecht, President, started the company in 1998, after 15 years involvement with flightseeing in Juneau. NorthStar Trekking employs four people in the winter, and between 25 and 30 people during the visitor season.

NorthStar Trekking flies three blue, six-passenger Eurocopter AS 350 helicopters, also called Astars. As an environmental consideration, the company modified all its helicopters to re-circulate discharged fuel and oil back into the aircraft to avoid contamination.

"We fly single helicopters or in groups of two," said Engelbrecht.

"The main focus of NorthStar Trekking's operation is longer trips to the glacier in small groups for hikes that emphasize learning about the technical aspects of glacier travel as well as learning about the glaciers and surrounding environment," he said. "We outfit people with mountaineering equipment for glacier travel, including crampons, ice axe, harness and helmet, and show them how to use it. We also explain how glaciers work and flow, what is going on with the topography and terrain, and the surrounding environment."

NorthStar uses its helicopters to access the glaciers and the Juneau Icefield and to give people an overview of the area. Including preparation and instruction, NorthStar Trekking's trips last four hours, with about three hours spent in the glacier environment. NorthStar Trekking also offers full-day and overnight trips to the glaciers and Icefield.

"We also offer a one-hour helicopter tour that includes a 20 to 25 minute landing on the glacier," Engelbrecht said.

NorthStar treks and tours take place on the Juneau Icefield and a number of different glaciers including the Mendenhall, Taku, Gilkey Battle, Theil and Norris.

## **Summer 2001: What You Can Expect From Flightseeing**

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Juneau icefield.

There are no TEMSCO tour flights that depart before 8 a.m. According to Thomas, "the vast majority of our glacier tour flights depart after 8:30 a.m. and the vast majority of our flights are completed between 5:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m."

Besides the modifications to our helicopters, which keep the glacier surface completely clean, TEMSCO has a strict no smoking, no-eating, no-drinking policy. "We absolutely never leave any trace of anything on the ice with the exception of a mobile tent for shelter during the summer," Thomas said.

In addition, TEMSCO spends a considerable amount of time and resources on pilot training, Thomas said. "We are very thorough in showing our pilots exactly where approved routes are,

reduce noise in the community," he said.

All TEMSCO routes are weather dependent. The company also uses another route that goes over Auke Bay and Spaulding Meadows. Its third route goes from the Rifle Range over the Green Belt to the airport.

"For all our routes we strictly adhere to the Voluntary Best Management Practices," Thomas said. "We don't go below 1500 feet and most of the time we fly between 2000 feet and 2500 feet, or even higher."

It's important to note that routes and altitudes are dependent on weather, cloud cover and traffic. "If the FAA tells us to change a route or altitude, we must comply with what the FAA tells us," he said. "The most important factor that affects routes and altitudes is safety."



**NorthStar Trekking**

extra bags to bring back any trash."

**Routes and altitudes**

All of the routes used by NorthStar are coordinated with the other Juneau tour operators and with the FAA for the purpose of assuring safety, avoiding residential and recreation areas to the largest extent possible, and to minimize noise impacts.

Except for take offs and landings, the company maintains a minimum 1500 feet elevation above residential areas, unless restricted by weather, traffic or Air Traffic Control. According to Engelbrecht, most of

"Because of the longer nature of our trips, it is important to be able to fly during reasonable daylight hours. We strictly adhere to the voluntary compliance agreements and never depart before 8 a.m., with all arrivals completed before 9 p.m. The normal departure time for our trek flights is 9 a.m., with only the occasional tour or guide flight occurring prior to that time. Most days our flight operations are completed by 7:30 or 8 p.m., with many days much earlier than that," said Engelbrecht.

Engelbrecht said the company works hard to share its concern for the environment with the people on treks.

"We emphasize maintaining responsible distances from wildlife and do not use our helicopters as a wildlife viewing platform. We also emphasize to our employees and our clients not leaving anything on the glacier," he said. "We want to make sure the glacier remains in its pristine, natural condition. Each person going to the glacier is made responsible for maintaining the natural conditions and are provided a pack and

the time NorthStar flies at between 2000 and 2500 feet over residential areas.

"Increasing elevation reduces noise," he said.

NorthStar is located at the Juneau Airport and primarily uses the west departure and arrival route, going out over Auke Bay and continuing toward the Mendenhall Glacier and Juneau Icefield.

North Star also uses the east departure going to Blackerby Ridge up toward the head of Lemon Creek to the icefield. Less frequently, the company uses the Mendenhall route that goes up the west side of the Mendenhall River.

"We are careful to observe the voluntary low use zones and to avoid all Forest Service cabins," said Engelbrecht.

**Era Aviation**

Era Aviation's operations are located on North Douglas and the Juneau International Airport. Amy Windred is Era's Director of Flightseeing Operations in Juneau. The company's helicopters are red and white, with black trim.

The current site of Era operations has been continually operating as a heliport since Livingston Helicopters began at the site in 1959. The Livingston family operated at the site until 1976 when Rowan Drilling Company purchased their company. ERA has been operating from the North Douglas site since the late 1970's and at the airport since 1999.

Era maintains five to eight employees throughout the winter, and employs about 70 people as part of its summer flightseeing operations.

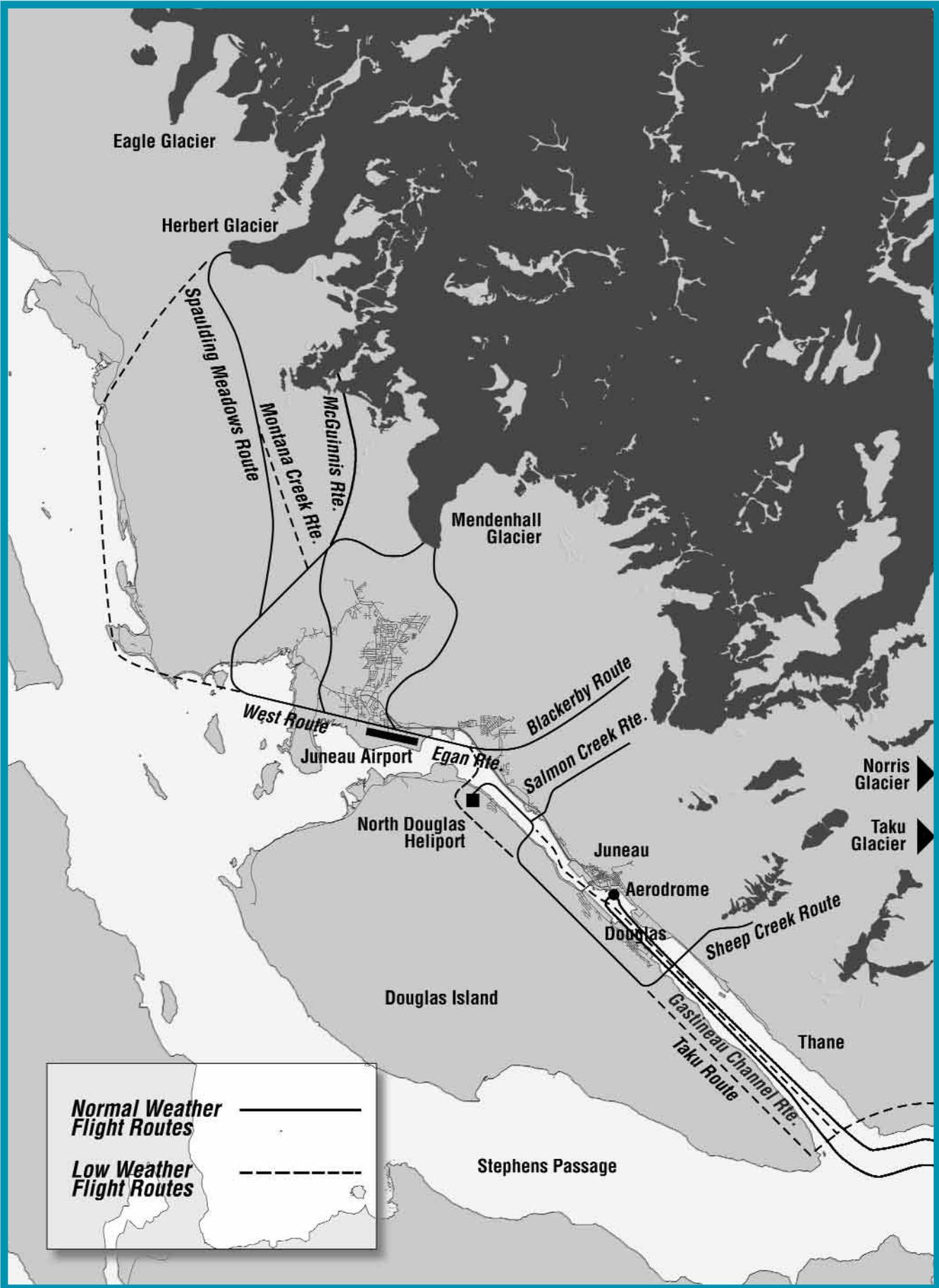
The company uses six-passenger Eurocopter AS 350 helicopters, also known as the Astar. Their aircraft are all specifically modified to recycle discharged fuel and oil back into the aircraft. All Era aircraft are fixed with floats that enable their helicopters to land in water if needed.

Era has two main tours, a two-hour dogsled tour and a one-hour "Glacier Panorama" tour. The company's main

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**Era Aviation**



# Flightseeing Routes: Flying Neighborly

**T**he Fly Neighborly program is a voluntary noise-reduction program designed by Helicopter Association International to be implemented worldwide by helicopter operators, large and small. The program aims at addressing noise abatement, pilot awareness and training, flight operations planning, safety, and sensitivity to community concerns.

As part of Juneau flightseeing operators work, the following routes were developed in concert with the Fly Neighborly Program guidelines in order to meet the goals outlined above. The flightseeing routes are specific to each company and are in concert with letters of agreement with the FAA, under which companies operate. Return flights reverse the routes, unless otherwise indicated.

## Steep Creek Route

The Steep Creek Route departs from the east end of the Juneau airport and climbs up the ridge behind Fred Meyer. This route proceeds behind Thunder Mountain, over Steep Creek to Nugget Falls and the Mendenhall Glacier or the Icefield. This route is used only by TEMSCO.

## West Departure Route

This route departs respective heliports north of the Taxiway and aircraft remain below 500 feet until the west parking area. They then climb to cross over the beacon on Mendenhall Peninsula at 2000 feet. From the beacon, the route proceeds west over Auke Bay, turning north over the Ferry terminal at 2000 to 2500 feet, and then flying toward the Rifle Range and to the glaciers or Icefield. TEMSCO Helicopters, NorthStar Trekking and Coastal Helicopters all use the West Departure Route.

## West Departure to Spaulding Meadows, McGinnis Creek, and the Mendenhall Glacier

The West Departure is used to access the Mendenhall Glacier (via the Rifle Range), the Herbert Glacier and the Juneau Icefield via the McGinnis Creek and Spaulding Meadows Route. The Spaulding Meadows Route is along the north edge of Spaulding Meadows and is designed to avoid overflying the Montana Creek Trail and Forest Service cabins. A low weather route up Montana Creek also comes off the west departure. The McGinnis Creek Route is a new route used to access the Herbert Glacier and Juneau Icefield on good weather days and it avoids the Windfall Lake area and the toe of the Herbert Glacier. TEMSCO Helicopters, NorthStar Trekking and Coastal Helicopters all use this route.

## West Departure to Lena Point

Lena Point is a low-weather route that proceeds west to Lena Point and up the shoreline of Lynn Canal to the northwest to access Herbert Glacier. TEMSCO Helicopters, NorthStar Trekking and Coastal Helicopters all use this route.

## Mendenhall Route

This route departs respective heliports north of the Taxiway. The aircraft stay below 500 feet until the west parking area, then climb to 2000 feet and make a turn to the North over the golf course. They then cross Egan Drive for the greenbelt to the west of the Mendenhall River, cross the Back Loop Road at Montana Creek, proceed to the Rifle Range for the Mendenhall Glacier, or proceed up Montana Creek/McGinnis Creek for the Herbert Glacier and Juneau Icefield. TEMSCO Helicopters, NorthStar Trekking and Coastal Helicopters all use this route.

## Egan Departure for Blackerby Ridge

The aircraft depart east from their respective heliports and stay north of the Taxiway. They remain below 500 feet until the east end of the airport and then climb along their route to the Lemon Creek Bridge, and either Blackerby Ridge, or transitioning to the North Douglas Route under low weather conditions. (See Below). All aircraft stay south of Sunny Point. The Egan departure to Blackerby Ridge is a primary route for TEMSCO Helicopters, NorthStar Trekking, Coastal Helicopters and Era Aviation, operating from the airport. Egan Departure to North Douglas is a secondary and low weather route.

## North Douglas Departure

Flights take off from the North Douglas heliport and ascend to 2200 to 2500 feet over the Channel and then turn south to fly along the mountains of Douglas Island. Across from Sheep Creek, the route crosses the Channel at 2500 feet and proceeds up the Sheep Creek Valley to the Norris and Taku Glaciers and Juneau Icefield. When weather restricts operations, the North Douglas departure proceeds down the Channel for Taku Inlet. The normal return route is via the Salmon Creek route to the North Douglas heliport. When weather conditions preclude the Salmon Creek route, the return is the reverse of the North Douglas departure. Era Helicopters is the primary user of this route.

## Gastineau Channel Route

Wings planes depart and return just right of the center of Gastineau Channel. On departure, the planes then travel toward Stephen's Passage to Taku Inlet. The outbound traffic will climb to a maximum altitude of 3000 to 5000 feet, depending on destination. Returning traffic in Gastineau Channel will maintain 1000 feet, weather permitting, until descent for landing. On rare clear days, deviations from the Gastineau route may take planes over the Mendenhall Glacier, via the airport, to a downtown landing.

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flightseeing destination is the Taku and Norris Glaciers.

According to Windred, "Era's first commercial flight starts at 8:30 a.m. and our last flight returns at 8 p.m. There are a few occasions, if we are running late due to weather, that we may have our last tour back as late as 8:20 p.m., but that is rare."

Throughout the day, the company has breaks of about two hours when there are no flights at all, Windred said.

"As far as support operations, three or four times a season the public may see maintenance flights related to safety that occur outside of those hours," she said.

Era's dog sledding tour has a camp

from North Douglas. The time from take off to the time when Era flights get past Thane Road is approximately two minutes.

"When we have clear weather, we ascend as quickly as possible to 2200 to 2500 feet. Before we fly past the Douglas Bridge, our flight route cuts over to the mountainside and we hug Mt. Jumbo," Windred said. "That keeps us near the trees which create a sound buffer and puts us away from houses."

Their flights then proceed up the Sheep Creek Valley and up the Taku River.

When there is a cloud cover, Era's route changes and the helicopters fly as high as they can down the center of

around Juneau, like Dean Williams, Marlene Johnson and Tommy Horn. The previous owners started tour flights for cruise visitors off the waterfront in the late 1960s and early 1970s."

Wing's present location has been used as an aerodrome since the 1920s.

"Alaska Coastal Airlines operated from the Hangar on the Wharf location from the mid-1930s until it merged with Alaska Airlines in 1968," Jacobsen said. "Tour flights have operated from the Hangar location for roughly 70 years."

Wings has about 60 year-round employees, with its team growing to roughly 100 during the visitor season.

Wings uses blue and white de Havilland Beavers and Otters for flightseeing operations. Throughout the 1980s, the company modified these aircraft to include three bladed propellers, which reduce noise.

"Beavers and Otters are classic Bush airplanes that have been used throughout the world as the workhorse in rural and marine environments," Jacobsen said.

Wings also operates a number of other aircraft used for its more than 60 regional scheduled flights each day. Those aircraft include two new, quiet Cessna Grand Caravans – the latest in small aircraft technology.

Wings offers two distinct kinds of flightseeing experiences from the waterfront.

"We take visitors on a three-hour trip to the historic Taku Glacier Lodge, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. This is a joint endeavor with Ken and Michelle Ward and their family," Jacobsen said. "We also operate 40-minute flights over the glaciers and the Juneau Icefield that take off and land from the aerodrome."

The earliest Wings tour departs at 8:30 a.m., however, more than half of the tours this season will depart after 9 a.m.

"On Sundays we have no tours scheduled prior to 9 a.m.," Jacobsen said.

The company has honored the

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set up on the glacier that has very specific pre-and post-season inspections.

"We are required to clean up all waste," Windred said. "Nothing at all is left on the glacier. We leave it as we came to it."

In addition, Era aircraft have all been modified to mitigate environmental impacts. "Being sensitive to the environment and the community is important to our company as a whole," she said. "We even have our own wastewater sewage plant and treat our own sewage at our North Douglas site."

### **Routes and altitudes**

In determining routes and altitudes for Era's operations, safety of passengers is the company's first concern. Most of Era's flights take off

Gastineau Channel.

"We completely avoid Gold Creek and other designated low use zones when doing flightseeing tours," Windred said. "Weather, including winds and cloud cover, affect our routes and altitudes."

### ***Wings of Alaska Airlines***

Wings of Alaska has offered tour flights from Juneau's downtown waterfront since its beginnings in 1982. Wings also offers commuter flights from the Juneau airport that serve Northern Southeast communities.

"The roots of our company started in 1969 as Southeast Skyways," said Wings President Bob Jacobsen. "Some of the owners were, and still are, familiar faces



*Wings of Alaska Airlines*

voluntary compliance agreements with the City since the late 1980s and strives to go beyond the agreement.

The latest Wings departure to Taku Lodge is at 5 p.m. and the latest glacier tour departure is at 6:30 p.m.

"Here again, we are striving to go beyond the voluntary guidelines by having our last departures earlier than 6:30 p.m. for more than 60 percent of the upcoming season," Jacobsen said.

We recognize that planes make noise and that airplane noise impacts some people. As a result, over the years, we have taken numerous steps to minimize impacts and will continue to do more, as we can," Jacobsen said.

In 1993 Wings purchased five larger airplanes to replace 10 noisier planes and the company is currently studying quieter engine technology.

### **Routes and altitudes**

Working with other operators, Wings has moved its cruising altitudes higher. "All our pilots are aware of our routes, altitudes, and objective to reduce noise over residential areas, sensitive trails and designated low-use zones," said Jacobsen. "They all know how much

our VP of Flight Ops, our Chief Pilot and I dislike getting phone calls about noise."

The company's tour flight routes take them down Gastineau Channel and up Taku River. The Lodge planes return over that same route, as do the majority of the Icefield tour planes. On Juneau's rare clear weather days, the Icefield tours may return over the Mendenhall Glacier and land downtown.

"Since our Beavers and Otters are built for short takeoffs and landings (STOL) they are slow and they don't climb very fast, so getting to and from altitude is a slower

process for our planes than for helicopters."

For Wings, routes and altitudes are affected by cloud-cover, winds and visibility.

"If our guests can't have an enjoyable tour, we don't fly," Jacobsen said.

### **Coastal Helicopters Inc.**

Coastal Helicopters Inc. has operated from its base at the Juneau International Airport for the past 12 years. The company, owned by James and Dorothy Wilson, employs 15 Juneau residents year-round and about 35 people during the visitor season.

Coastal uses yellow and white Astar helicopters and a helicopter known as the Jet Ranger. As with other operators, Coastal's six-passenger Astars are

specially modified to recycle discharged fuel and oil back into the aircraft. Their specially modified Jet Rangers seat four people plus the pilot, and are used primarily for smaller groups.

Coastal owner Jim Wilson said his company tries to provide a private tour for visitors.

"We don't land in large groups," he said. "One aircraft goes out at a time and the pilot stays with the group."

Coastal flights land at the Herbert Glacier, the Taku Glacier, and the Norris; and also in some of the backcountry on the icefield.

The company's most popular tour is one hour long. They also have a two-hour trip that includes two landings and takes people into the backcountry on the icefield.

"Our tour flights never take off before 8 a.m.," said Wilson. "We do have some non-tour flights before 8 a.m. for

### **Coastal Helicopters Inc.**



local companies, such as those companies that maintain wind profilers on the mountains for Alaska Airlines, or for various government agencies that go to remote locations."

Coastal normally schedules its departure no later than 6 p.m. for those passengers whose ships arrive into Juneau later in the day. They return to Juneau by 7 p.m.

"We believe that helicopter tours

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have very little negative environmental impacts," Wilson said. "We don't leave trails across muskegs, and when we land on glaciers we don't leave any evidence we were there. We make it possible for people who are not physically capable of hiking or accessing glaciers any other way to enjoy their National Forest without damaging the environment."

Wilson stressed that Coastal Helicopters business with local companies actually helps control environmental impacts.

"Our helicopters take technicians and construction crews to mountaintop projects to allow work on radio repeaters or microwave repeaters. Without helicopters roads would be built and they would have a much more significant

impact on the environment."

### Routes and altitudes

All helicopter companies have spent many hours establishing or changing routes in an attempt to minimize the noise impact of helicopters on the community. These routes contribute to the safety for all flights. When weather permits, its flights leave the airport and climb to 2000 feet or higher to help alleviate noise. Cloud cover, wind and directions from the tower may affect routes.

"One thing that is significant about our tours is that the majority of our tourist flights are single aircraft going to the glacier. For our one-hour trips, about five minutes or less is generally over residential areas," Wilson said.

## Who We Are

Friends of Aviation is a non-profit organization that first formed to oppose the October 2000 ballot initiative to limit flightseeing operations. After the defeat of the initiative, the group remained active to work cooperatively with the CBJ, the Forest Service, FAA and the community. The following Juneau flightseeing operators are members of Friends of Aviation:

***Coastal Helicopters***

***Era Aviation***

***NorthStar Trekking***

***TEMSCO Helicopters***

***Wings of Alaska Airlines***

We sincerely hope that as we provide additional information, we can continue to answer questions and address concerns. Please send your questions to our web site at [www.flyfriendly.org](http://www.flyfriendly.org). We will do our best to answer your questions in upcoming newsletters and fact sheets.



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