

Re: Planes Over Lummi Island

Fri, Apr 9, 2021
at 2:50 PM

To: Chief Pilot at San Juan Airlines <chiefpilot@sanjuanairlines.com>

Hi Ryan,

I appreciate the conversation, but in all reality it's nearly impossible to get the N number from a plane flying overhead. And since last summer, the flight tracker apps no longer reflect SJA's tail numbers. So, I will go back to my original request which is to lean on the good will and neighborly concern of the airline and all of its pilots to be as considerate as possible when flying over the island. You could even be setting a stellar example for other pilots in the area!

Thanks again,

On Thu, Apr 8, 2021 at 4:27 PM Chief Pilot at San Juan Airlines <chiefpilot@sanjuanairlines.com> wrote:

...

Thanks for the additional information! ... I know it can be difficult to see [N numbers] if the aircraft is directly overhead, but if you're able to make a note of them that's the best way to determine what pilot I should talk with.

As for today's flights, I think the 7:48 AM flight was ours. I can't roll in on a pilot for being 100 feet lower than standard, though, especially when there's no regulation against it (as you mentioned, even if we take a very conservative definition of "congested area"). Can I ask how you're determining aircraft altitude? Are you looking at information on a flight radar type program? The reason I ask is those programs usually rely on ADS-B output and that can vary somewhat depending on the equipment installed in the aircraft and barometric pressure. They should be fairly accurate, but a variation of 100 feet or more wouldn't be unusual.

...In any case, I want to be careful to avoid micromanaging the pilots and crossing over to a mode where I'm actually less effective at making change. Do you think it would be workable to report when our planes are below 1000 ft on good weather days? That might be a good cutoff where I can have a meaningful conversation with someone about the procedures. I'm always open to hearing your thoughts and ideas for how we can improve!

Thanks,

Ryan

Sent: Thursday, April 8, 2021 1:43 PM

To: Chief Pilot at San Juan Airlines <chiefpilot@sanjuanairlines.com>

Subject: Re: Planes Over Lummi Island

Dear Ryan,

I so appreciate you taking the time to respond, as well as any and all efforts SJA is making to minimize noise for its island neighbors. You provide an important service that we'd like to support, so it's unfortunate that noise is an inevitable side-effect.

It's great news that your policy is to fly at least 1500 feet across the island, and I was encouraged this morning by an early west-bound plane flying at about 2000 feet, which does make a difference. An east-bound flight (C207, 7:48 AM) looked closer to 1400' (roughly 1200' above my property) in clear and still conditions at ground level...

Ideally, whenever possible pilots would fly as high as reasonable and safe and vary flight paths to lessen continual impact on any one area of residents. Obviously, you are far more familiar with FAA rules than I, but there are hundreds of year-round homes on Lummi Island, concentrated (except for Scenic Estates) from the mountain northward. In my conversations with the FAA, it became clear that a 500' vs 1000' minimum in our area could be open for debate, based on a loose definition of 'congested.' While I suspect most islanders would not lump our populated half of the island into the same bucket as a populated urban area, few respond well to planes flying at 500'!

Thank you again for your response and interest, and I wish you a successful summer season!

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On Wed, Apr 7, 2021 at 8:28 AM Chief Pilot at San Juan Airlines <chiefpilot@sanjuanairlines.com> wrote:

...

Thank you for your email and the time you have taken to reach out. Your concerns matter to us and we sincerely want to do our best to keep the island environment a peaceful one. We understand that our planes are some of the loudest that fly regularly in the area and apologize for the disturbance to you.

In training, we emphasize flying in a way that limits noise when that is consistent with best practices for safety. The FAA regulations for our type of operation mandate that we not fly below 500 feet en-route, but our company policy is to be at least 1,500 ft when crossing Lummi when the weather permits. The difficulty, as I'm sure you already know, is that low ceilings often dictate our routing and, on many days with surrounding fog and low visibility, the safest or only legal route is across mid-Lummi at a lower altitude. Although it is certainly not always the case, sometimes the prevailing southerly flow causes clouds to disperse north of the terrain there and reconvene toward the north end of the island.

I did follow up regarding what I believe is the flight yesterday that prompted your email, and selection of route and altitude was weather related. Given the number of pilots we have and the amount of turnover, I'm sure you may see someone flying lower than we would like them to when weather is *not* an issue. If you would like to email me directly in those cases, and if you can include

the time and tail number, I will work with the pilots to try to limit those instances to when we really have to be there for safety reasons. Please let me know if there is anything else I can do.

Thank you,

Ryan Parlin

Tue, Apr 6,
2021, 8:00
AM

to info

Dear Mr. Douglass,

I am writing as one of many Lummi Island residents who are greatly impacted by frequent small planes passing overhead, including San Juan Airlines.

After writing last July, we've been encouraged that your planes appear to be flying more consistently at or slightly above the minimum altitude. Even though SJA registration numbers no longer appear on flight tracker apps, it's no mystery that your planes fly overhead each weekday morning at roughly 7:16. (Unfortunately, we can pretty much set our clocks to your planes.) Some, like this morning, are flying quite low. Whether we are plane enthusiasts or not, low-flying planes are loud and disruptive, particularly in the early morning.

We are hoping that SJA will have its pilots fly higher and/or along routes that are more southerly or northerly when feasible. Obviously, SJA does not operate all of the small planes that criss-cross the island; however, with the regularity of your flights, your cooperation would be greatly appreciated.

I'm sure you're aware that there's not much we as citizens can do to limit the number or impact of the many small planes that frequent our skies, so we are relying on your sense of being a considerate neighbor. We would be *most* grateful for your help.

Thank you,