

Ned Merrick  
Freeport

Hello,

Thank you for gathering information about airboat noise and sharing it with others at DIFW for their review.

I am a lifelong Freeporter, born and raised. My wife and two children, ages 3 and almost 1 live just a mile down the road from my parents and not far from where I used to lobster as a kid. I love this town. I support the commercial fishing industry and the outdoor recreational community we have here in this town. These two industries have coexisted quite well for many years until recently. The extreme noise of airboats has made life on the water at time untenable.

This past summer my daughter was sleeping peacefully when she woke up screaming and crying at the top of her lungs at 3am scared to death of the airboat noise. This happened on 3 days at approximately 3 am and multiple times during the summer during her naps. My son was awakened by the noise and yelled, 'Dad please make it stop!' It sounds like an airplane is landing on my house and it scares my children. How on earth can we allow this? Even sitting inside on the phone at my home office I cannot carry on a conversation with the noise level of the airboat and it is 1400ft from my house and I'm inside. People on the phone routinely ask, "Is there an airplane landing on your house?" I have recorded 95db consistently on multiple occasions at my house and it hurts my ears. I cannot safely let my children outside with that noise. This is a MAJOR disruption to our life. How can we consciously allow 1 person to disrupt hundreds or even thousands of residents, campers, kayakers, HYC sailing students, shoppers in town, and fishermen so intensely? What happens when there are not 2, but 6-8 airboats all operating at once in the same area? The proposed 90db limitation would be exacerbated and reverberate throughout the entire river to a much higher level that would make life unbearable for everyone.

I do live on the water and hear the complaints of clambers that they cannot access flats from the land, but I also know many places and people who allow access over their land and all of the flats are accessible by boat. I would gladly allow clambers access over my land, but clamming is permanently closed in my area due to the sewage facility nearby. I am sure that if you asked land owners, "Would you be willing to allow clambers access to the flats if it meant airboat noise would be reduced?" there would be a resounding response and land access would open up. Please consider this as an alternative. Matt Cheney made a great suggestion regarding an access map. I also watch small aluminum skiffs go up and down the river and they have done so for years. Why is this suddenly not a viable option for some clambers? I am not looking to put anyone out of business, but a compromise must be reached.

Please also consider the economics of this to the entire state. Are campers going to continue to frequent Wolfe's Neck and Winslow park if they keep getting woken up at 3am by an airboat? How much town and state revenue will be lost due to this?

You are on the precipice of a major decision. Who do we want to be as a state? Do we want to continue with the peaceful aesthetic of vacationland or do we want loud buzzing airboats disturbing residents and visitors enjoying the natural beauty of our state? Are we Florida or are we Maine?

We have a noise ordinance in place for a reason. Why would airboats get special exemptions? I can't start loud work on my carpentry jobsite at 3am and that noise is minuscule in comparison to an airboat.

Has anyone done studies on the impacts of airboat noise on birds and other wildlife, particularly in the Harraseeket River where I live? It seems to me that would be an important issue for the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to investigate before making any decisions.

The airboat noise has caused me and my family great stress over the last 2 years as we try to raise a young family in this wonderful state. I urge you to consider reducing the

noise level to 65db at 50ft and restricting hours of use to 7am-7pm. Of the two bills I support LD89 and oppose LD114, but I honestly don't believe either is strong enough to support our needs as a family. How will this law be enforced?

I agree strongly with many of the letters written by my neighbors and members of Mainers Against Coastal Noise Pollution who convey similar concerns and frustration with the airboat noise.

Thank you for your time and consideration, I realize this is a difficult issue to resolve.

Ned Merrick  
Freeport, Me