

Mackinac Island Airport Projects Do Not Include Longer Runway

By Karen Gould

Two airport projects have some Island residents concerned that the Mackinac Island Airport runway is about to be lengthened to accommodate larger planes. Work at the airport, which includes remodeling the terminal and clearing trees on the approaches to the landing strip, simply is part of a plan to keep the airport in compliance with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Michigan Bureau of Aeronautics regulations, said Phil Porter, director of Mackinac State Historic Parks, which operates the facility.

their passengers." It is done at all airports and is not specific to Mackinac Island, he added.

In addition to the renovation project now underway at the airport's terminal building, last fall the Mackinac Island State Park Commission approved leveling 200 feet on each side and both ends of the runway to make the area safer for landings and take-offs. Work also included clearing trees for a glide path on the east end of the runway on land owned by the park.

The clearing work was moved to the west side of the runway this spring, and that is what sparked resident concerns, because much of the property there is privately owned, said Mr. Porter. The park also has an easement on a portion of the land.

Park staff advised lot and homeowners of the airport's need to cut or trim some trees that are in violation of FAA height requirements, but because the height requirements change with their distance and angle from the runway, it

became difficult to determine the height limit at any particular spot. Some property owners in the glide path also expressed an interest in knowing any height restrictions that could be placed on homes they might build there, said Mr. Porter. That concern prompted the park commission to hire a surveyor to map the height requirements, which take the form of a three-dimensional graph. The survey work recently was completed and a report on building height limitations in the area is expected to be finished in the next 30 days, he said.

"The Airport Approach Plan Report will give all of us the information we need to move forward," said Mr. Porter.

The Mackinac Island State Park Commission has a five year plan for the airport, which is a public document, and includes a list projects that include keeping the airport safe, maintaining the runway surface, and accommodating airport users, explained Mr. Porter.

The first landing strip on the



Taken earlier this year, snow cover helps to define the Mackinac Island Airport runway layout and shows the clearing area as a plane approaches the Island from the east.

Island was built in 1934, and it wasn't until 1965, when the airport was rebuilt, that the runway was first paved. In terms of landings and take-offs, Mackinac Island now has the busiest year-around airport in the Upper Peninsula. The airport handled 10,674 landings last year and is served by Great Lakes Air with most flights origi-

nating from the Mackinac County Airport in St. Ignace.

The Island airport typically handles small turbo-prop planes and some light jets, said Paul Fullerton, manager of the Mackinac County Airport and owner of Great Lakes Air.

The other project currently taking shape at the airport includes

enlarging and updating services at the terminal building. The structure is scheduled to be lengthened by 12 feet to accommodate a larger waiting room, restrooms will become handicap accessible, a covered carriage entrance will be added, and the building's facade update. The terminal renovations are expected to be completed by May 2007.

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