

# The Diablo Aviator

A Publication of the Contra Costa County Airports Division

Buchanan Field and Byron Airports - [www.buchananfield-byronairports.org](http://www.buchananfield-byronairports.org)

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## BUCHANAN FIELD AIRPORT MASTER PLAN / FAR PART 150 NOISE STUDY ISSUE

### Letter From The Director



Dear Community Members:

In 2004, the County began updating the Buchanan Field Airport Master Plan to guide future growth over the next 20 years. Elements of the plan include ways to accommodate future aviation needs, identifying the type of aircraft and businesses the airport can support and determining methods to mitigate impacts on surrounding communities.

The next phase of the Master Plan begins this month with a voluntary study to evaluate aircraft noise exposure. The last noise mitigation study was completed almost 20 years ago and we are undertaking this new study for the following reasons:

- To provide the County and community members with accurate data on current, and future, noise effects;
- To evaluate new technology that might be appropriate to monitor noise;

- To evaluate other airport's noise mitigation programs to determine methodologies that might be useful for Buchanan Field;
- To work collaboratively with the community to identify alternatives to mitigate noise effects on surrounding communities within the parameters of Federal Aviation Administration directives.

Given Buchanan Field Airport's central setting and proximity to residential areas, I believe that public input is vital to the noise study. We want to hear from you! We want to know if you think aircraft noise is a problem, how it does – or doesn't – impact your daily life, and ideas you have to lessen noise effects. We want to know what you think we are doing right and areas where you think we can do better.

I look forward to working with all interested members of the public in the completion of the noise study and in the development of the master plan. Please feel free to read this newsletter for more information and call me or other airport staff with questions and comments.

Sincerely,  
Keith Freitas  
Director of Airports

### Inside this issue:

Master Plan Update	2
What is a FAR Part 150 Noise Study?	2–3
Master Plan Meeting Notice	4

## Master Plan Update



More than 250 people attended the January 18th meeting.

In January, the County hosted the fourth in a series of meetings to discuss the master plan. The element under discussion was alternative land uses and a recommended plan for future land use was presented.

The recommended plan is similar to the current land configuration of Buchanan Field. Here is a brief summary of key preliminary recommendations for conceptual airfield development:

1. Buchanan Field Airport should retain its existing four-runway configuration and existing runway orientation;
2. No extension of any runway is recommended in the Master Plan;
3. No re-orientation of any runways is recommended in the Master Plan; and,
4. A reduction in airfield complexity may be achieved by taxiway improvements. The recommended development concept for Buchanan Field Airport will focus on taxiway refinements and improvements in an effort to reduce airfield complexity.

## Noise Study Begins

A year ago the County began updating the Master Plan for Buchanan Field Airport. The next phase of the Master Plan begins this month with the start of the Federal Aviation Regulation (FAR) Part 150 Noise Study.

The noise study is a voluntary study and is primarily funded by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The FAA provides very specific directions on how to complete the noise study and on what we can – and can't do – to lessen noise effects. For instance, the FAA will not let us unilaterally limit certain types of aviation activities, such as touch and goes, nor will it let us restrict certain types of aircraft, such as corporate jets.

The FAA does encourage us to work with our technical experts, our pilots, and representatives of our community to develop workable solutions, and sometimes compromises, which can be applied to the airport to lessen effects. These may include using new technology to track planes altitudes, strengthening our voluntary noise program and pilot education, providing a greater emphasis on community outreach and education, providing incentives for the use of new, quieter aircraft, or a host of other ideas as yet to be identified.

The County believes that working with and involving our community in all phases of this study will lead to a better noise study and Master Plan that provides creative, workable ideas and solutions that respect all the communities we serve - business, emergency services, commercial, residential, pilot, and recreational.

### What can the County accomplish with the noise study?

The last noise study was conducted in 1987 when airport operations were significantly higher than they are today (231,000 take-offs and landings in 1987 and 124,000 take-offs and landings in 2005). Technology has also changed significantly in the last 20 years.

We are conducting this study to collect up-to-date data that reflects our current operating conditions and allows us to project future conditions. Using this information we can limit incompatible land uses when developing the Master Plan. We can also work with the community to find ways to lessen potential noise impacts.

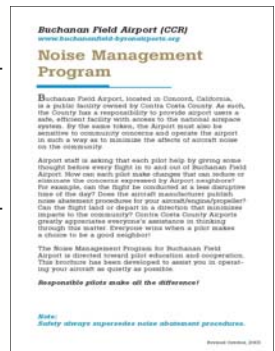
### How long does the noise study take?

The noise study will take about a year.

### What are the elements of the County's current noise program for Buchanan Field?

Buchanan Field Airport is one of only a handful of general aviation airports in California that has a current noise ordinance to help curtail some aviation noise for the communities that surround the 60 year-old airport. Current components of the noise ordinance are:

- Restricted training hours, that are expanded on the weekends and holidays
- Restriction of older, louder Stage 2 aircraft (unless involved in a medical emergency, and federal or state operated aircraft)
- No banner towing originating from Buchanan Field Airport
- No formation flying originating from Buchanan Field Airport
- Preferential runways for training, departures and approaches to lessen the impact of our neighbors
- Restriction of training for jet aircraft



### **If you are unable to restrict certain operations because of the FAA, how is public input considered and acted on?**

Although airports are no longer unilaterally able to restrict operations because of Federal laws, we can enter into voluntary agreements to lessen the effects on aircraft noise on communities. Pilot and community education is an important component of a Part 150 Noise Study. There may be specific noise events which can be addressed and monitored, or specific voluntary programs that can be developed to aid in reducing aircraft noise effects.

### **How can the FAA say there are no noise impacts when I am constantly bothered by aircraft noise from planes flying over my house?**

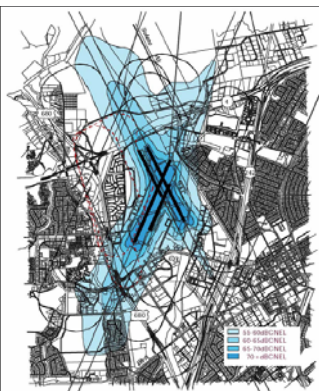
The FAA is not saying that residences are not bothered by aircraft noise. The Federal standard addresses compatibility of land uses within certain aircraft noise levels. We know that people are affected by aircraft noise in different ways and the Federal guidelines do not always address the concerns of all the citizens. The Federal guidelines do not mean that aircraft noise is not annoying beyond the identified standard; it identifies areas where Federal funding is available for noise mitigation purposes and sets a standard for noncompatible land uses.

### **Why can't the County just ban noisy airplanes from the airport, close the airport at night, or relocate all touch and go operations to Byron Airport?**

The FAA limits the restrictions that the County can place on aircraft using the airport based on Congressional mandates. The County cannot just eliminate certain operations and/or types of planes because an aircraft ban or curfew would be an access restriction and would not be allowed by the FAA.

### **Why can't the County make airplanes just fly higher over the residential areas?**

The FAA determines the safe and efficient use of the airspace. As part of the noise study, the County will review airplane arrival and departure procedures to determine opportunities to reduce aircraft noise, consistent with the safe and efficient use of airspace.



Noise Exposure Maps, such as this one, will be used for the Part 150 Noise Study.

### **How Is a Part 150 Study conducted?**

The FAA provides specific directions on how to conduct noise studies. The studies must include: 1) the development of Noise Exposure Maps and Noise Compatibility Programs by airport operators, 2) standard noise units, methods, and analytical techniques for use in airport noise studies, 3) identification of land uses which are normally compatible (or non-compatible) with various levels of noise around airport, and 4) procedures and criteria for FAA approval and disapproval of recommended noise compatibility programs. The study also examines whether changing the way aircraft operate would reduce noise in neighborhoods.

The noise study is conducted in two phases. The first phase, Noise Exposure Maps, identifies noise exposure as required by FAA guidelines. The second phase, Noise Compatibility Program, identifies programs and procedures to reduce or eliminate present and future land use incompatibilities.

## Contra Costa County Airports

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Buchanan Field and Byron Airports

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Get Involved. Share Your Views.  
Attend the Next Community Meeting.

### **Buchanan Field Airport Master Plan Public Meeting**

Topic: FAR Part 150 Noise Study  
Date: Wednesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2006  
Time: 7:00 p.m.  
Place: Crowne Plaza Hotel,  
45 John Glenn Drive  
Concord, California