

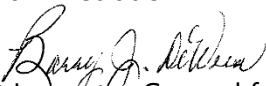


---

## Memorandum

Date: September 2, 2021

Subject: INFORMATION: Audit Announcement | FAA's Oversight of Noise Compatibility Land Monitoring and Disposal | Project No. 21F3014F000  
Federal Aviation Administration

From: Barry J. DeWeese   
Principal Assistant Inspector General for Auditing and Evaluation

To: Federal Aviation Administrator

---

Airports are responsible for mitigating the effects of aircraft noise in surrounding communities. The Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Airport Improvement Program (AIP)—one of DOT's largest grant programs—awards over \$3 billion a year to grantees, including commercial and general aviation airports. These grants support projects that improve safety and security, reduce congestion, and help fund the costs of mitigating noise and other environmental effects. Between fiscal years 2005 and 2020, AIP awarded \$2.2 billion in grants for land acquisition, including land for airport development<sup>1</sup> and for purposes compatible with noise levels associated with airport operations.

In our last audit of FAA's oversight of noise compatibility land management,<sup>2</sup> we found that FAA and AIP grantees inconsistently applied grant requirements and Agency policies on regulating the disposal of noise land<sup>3</sup> purchased with AIP grants. For example, we found that grantees had AIP-funded noise land that either was no longer required for such purposes or did not have documented plans to use the land for airport development. Moreover, while grantees disposed of some unneeded noise land, several could not use the proceeds or did not document that they used all proceeds in accordance with grant requirements. As

---

<sup>1</sup> Examples of airport development purposes include terminal facilities, aircraft landing and approach areas, runway protection zones, and airport utilities.

<sup>2</sup> *Audit of the Management of Land Acquired under Airport Noise Compatibility Programs* (OIG Report No. AV-2005-078), September 30, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Federal regulations prescribe compatible noise exposure levels, measured in decibels, for land surrounding airports, which FAA refers to as "noise land," based on existing and future uses. As a condition of AIP grant awards, airports agree to dispose of noise land when it is no longer needed for noise purposes or airport development.

a result, we recommended that FAA develop and implement plans to recover approximately \$242 million from airport grantees' disposal proceeds.

Given the Agency's large investments for land acquisitions since our 2005 report, we are initiating an audit to assess FAA's oversight of land that grantees acquire with AIP grants for noise compatibility. This audit will include a focus on the Agency's processes for determining (1) whether grantees identify land they no longer need for noise compatibility and (2) whether the grantees dispose of such land in accordance with Federal regulations and FAA policy.

We plan to begin the audit in September and will contact your audit liaison to schedule an entrance conference. We will conduct our work at FAA Headquarters, Regional and District Offices, and various grantee locations nationwide. If you have any questions, please contact me at 202-366-1302, or Dory Dillard-Christian, Program Director, at 202-570-6381.

cc: DOT Audit Liaison, M-1  
FAA Audit Liaison, AAE-100