



Does LaGuardia Need

New York City plans to build a garbage transfer station less than half a mile from LaGuardia Airport.

BY STEVEN D. GARBER

Plans by the New York City Department of Sanitation to build a truck-to-barge transfer station handling nearly 2,700 tons of garbage a day, and up to 5,000 tons per day, close to New York's LaGuardia Airport (LGA), have prompted some to object. The facility at College Point would be around 2,200 ft (671 m) from the end of a busy LGA runway. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the airport operator, and the Department of Sanitation say that closed containers on barges and trucks, plus handling the transfer in an enclosed structure, would not attract birds. If this were true, you would think they would have done

the studies that prove this, as required by the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), but they haven't.

There are more Canada geese, gulls and other large birds in the skies around cities and airports in North America than ever. Wherever birds and airplanes share the same airspace, it's only a matter of time before another airplane crashes, as was the case this past January when an aircraft that had departed from LGA was forced to ditch in the Hudson River.

There are many rules, laws and regulations regarding managing birds around airports, and some of these rules are taken seriously by

airport management. Some rules, however, aren't.

Rule number one: Garbage attracts birds. Therefore it would seem safe to conclude that the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey knows that LGA should not be surrounded with garbage barges, garbage trucks and a garbage transfer station, but that is not the case.

LaGuardia's management knows better. I know this for sure because I used to be part of Port Authority's management. I've worked closely with Port Authority Airport Directors Al Graser, Warren Kroepfel and Lanny Rider. Why would they let College Point become Garbage Point?

New York City is much like many other cities in that its Sanitation Department has far more power than makes sense, unless you appreciate the inner workings of cities. What's so un-

knows how important it is to protect America's busiest airspace and those of us who live around the airport. Bloomberg recently was in a jet that hit a bird. Shortly thereafter, he scheduled a tour with the FAA and the Port Authority of the new transfer facility he was supporting. Almost immediately after his tour, yet another LGA jet hit yet another goose.

Bird strikes at LaGuardia have been steadily increasing. The FAA has rules that call for reducing the risks, not increasing them, and yet, that's exactly what the FAA is doing by giving the green light on this. Instead of taking measures designed to minimize hazardous wildlife attractions on and around the airport, it seems all involved are doing the opposite of what is required to reduce or eliminate the number of gulls and geese and other dangerous species

FAA, in Advisory Circular 150/5200-33B, issued in August 2007, says, "Information about the risks posed to aircraft by certain wildlife species has increased a great deal in recent years. Improved reporting, studies, documentation and statistics clearly show that aircraft collisions with birds and other wildlife are a serious economic and public safety problem." Notwithstanding this support for documentation, it is not clear the agency studied the issue. FAA insists, however, that studies were done and that the garbage barges and garbage trucks and garbage transfer station, for the first time in the history of this planet, will not attract birds.

Instead of fighting these plans tooth and nail, the Port Authority has quietly gone along. In the end, who's going to get sued when the next airplane crashes? It seems most of the government agencies are immune from such litigation. In the end, it's going to be the insurance companies that cover the airlines flying into and out of these airports that will have to pay. So you might think they would balk, and do something to stop the inevitable before it happens. Someone should. 🍷

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More Birds?

usual here is that it's not just New York that has made the wrong choice. Here, we've seen every government agency on the wrong side of this issue.

Although most New Yorkers were saddened, few were surprised when, along with the New York City and New York State agencies, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) told the Sanitation Department it could build — right next to LGA — a marine transfer station, with all the garbage-related business that would involve, even though these activities are against FAA regulations and even though these activities fall squarely within the LGA runway protection zone.

If anyone should have been able to see this for what it is, it's New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, a pilot who

flying directly through sensitive areas that lie under or next to approach and departure airspace.

Luckily, the fear of negative media reports still has some impact on those involved. That's why I'm writing this. I want to remind them and everyone else around the world who might be contemplating building a bird attractant near an airport that, in the end, it can only lead to tragedy.

New York City has stepped up to this issue in the past. I've been involved in forcing other Sanitation Department operations to close over the past several decades, including three garbage dumps surrounding John F. Kennedy International Airport, where birds attracted by the garbage were constantly getting sucked into jet engines.

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