



Fort Davis National Historic Site

Acoustical Monitoring 2010

Natural Resource Technical Report NPS/NRSS/NRTR—2013/769



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ON THE COVER

Fort Davis National Historic Site, taken in 2010

Volpe Center Photo

Fort Davis National Historic Site

Acoustical Monitoring 2010

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Prepared For:

U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Natural Resource Program Center
Natural Sounds and Night Skies Division
1201 Oakridge Drive
Fort Collins, CO 80525



Prepared By:

U.S. Department of Transportation
Research and Innovative Technology Administration
John A. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center
Environmental Measurement and Modeling Division, RVT-41



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13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words) During the summer of 2010 (September - October 2010), the Volpe Center collected collected baseline acoustical data at Fort Davis National Historic Site (FODA) at two sites deployed for approximately 30 days each. The baseline data collected during this period will help park managers and planners estimate the effects of future noise impacts and will help to inform future park planning objectives such as creating soundscape management plans, as well as the development of an Air Tour Management Plan (ATMP), which provides for the regulation of commercial air tours. The sound sources of concern at FODA include developments near park boundaries, air tours, commercial and private aircraft activities, and requests for special use permits for noisy activities. This document summarizes the results of the noise measurement study.				
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Executive Summary

During September - October of 2010, two acoustical monitoring systems were deployed in Fort Davis National Historic Site (FODA) by Volpe National Transportation Systems Center personnel. The purpose of this monitoring effort was to characterize existing sound levels and estimate natural ambient sound levels in these areas, as well as identify audible sound sources. This report provides a summary of results of these measurements, representing the soundscape of FODA's summer season.

In determining the current conditions of an acoustical environment, the NPS examines how often sound pressure levels exceed certain decibel values that relate to human health and speech. The NPS uses these values for making comparisons, but should not be construed as thresholds of impact. Table 1 and Table 2 report the percent of time that measured levels were above four decibels values at each of the FODA measurement locations for the summer season in dBA and in dBT. The first decibel value, 35 dBA, addresses the health effects of sleep interruption (Haralabidis et al. 2008). The second value addresses the World Health Organization's recommendations that noise levels inside bedrooms remain below 45 dBA (Berglund et al. 1999). The third value, 52 dBA, is based on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA 1974) speech interference threshold for speaking in a raised voice to an audience at 10 meters. This value addresses the effects of sound on interpretive presentations in parks. The final value, 60 dBA, provides a basis for estimating impacts on normal voice communications at 1 m (3 ft). Hikers and visitors viewing scenic vistas in the park would likely be conducting such conversations.

Table 1. Percent Time Above Metrics (dBA)

Site ID	Site Name	% Time above sound level: 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.				% Time above sound level: 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.			
		35 dBA	45 dBA	52 dBA	60 dBA	35 dBA	45 dBA	52 dBA	60 dBA
FODA001	North Ridge Trail	6.86	0.48	0.04	0.00	66.88	21.43	0.02	0.00
FODA002	Sleepy Lion Mt.	45.95	7.02	0.19	0.00	87.39	52.16	10.79	0.00

Table 2. Percent Time Above Metrics Truncated (dBT)

Site ID	Site Name	% Time above sound level: 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.				% Time above sound level: 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.			
		35 dBT	45 dBT	52 dBT	60 dBT	35 dBT	45 dBT	52 dBT	60 dBT
FODA001	North Ridge Trail	4.86	0.24	0.03	0.01	1.08	0.02	0.01	0.01
FODA002	Sleepy Lion Mt.	30.73	4.75	0.08	0.00	10.57	0.30	0.01	0.00

Table 3 summarizes the acoustic observer log data (office listening and in-situ logging combined) and provide an indication of the amount of time that certain sources are present at each site. The in-situ logging is performed during visits to the site itself; office listening is performed in the office using audio files that were collected at each site.



Table 3. Summary of acoustic observer log data (in situ and office listening combined) for all sites

Site ID	Site Name	% Time Audible			
		Fixed-Wing Aircraft and Helicopters	Other Aircraft Sounds	Other Human Sounds	Natural Sounds
FODA001	North Ridge Trail	1.2%	0.1%	86.5%	12.2%
FODA002	Sleepy Lion Mt.	1.5%	6.3%	60.5%	31.8%



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Introduction

An important part of the National Park Service (NPS) mission is to preserve and/or restore the natural resources of the parks, including the natural soundscapes associated with units of the national park system. The collection of ambient sound level data provides valuable information about a park's acoustic conditions for use in developing soundscape management plans.

Ambient data are also required to establish a baseline from which noise impacts can be assessed. The National Parks Air Tour Management Act of 2000 provides for the regulation of commercial air tour operations over units of the national park system through air tour management plans (ATMPs). The objective of the ATMPs is to develop acceptable and effective measures to mitigate or prevent significant adverse impacts, if any, of commercial air tour operations upon the natural and cultural resources of and visitor experiences in national park units as well as tribal lands (those included in or abutting a national park).

The U.S. Department of Transportation, Research and Innovative Technology Administration, John A. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center (Volpe Center) is supporting the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Western-Pacific Region (AWP) and NPS, Natural Sounds and Night Skies Division (NSNSD) in the development of ATMPs.

Ambient data were collected by Volpe Center personnel in Fort Davis National Historic Site (FODA) during September - October 2010. A map of the areas managed by FODA is shown in Figure 1. The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the results of these measurements and will be used to represent FODA's summer season.

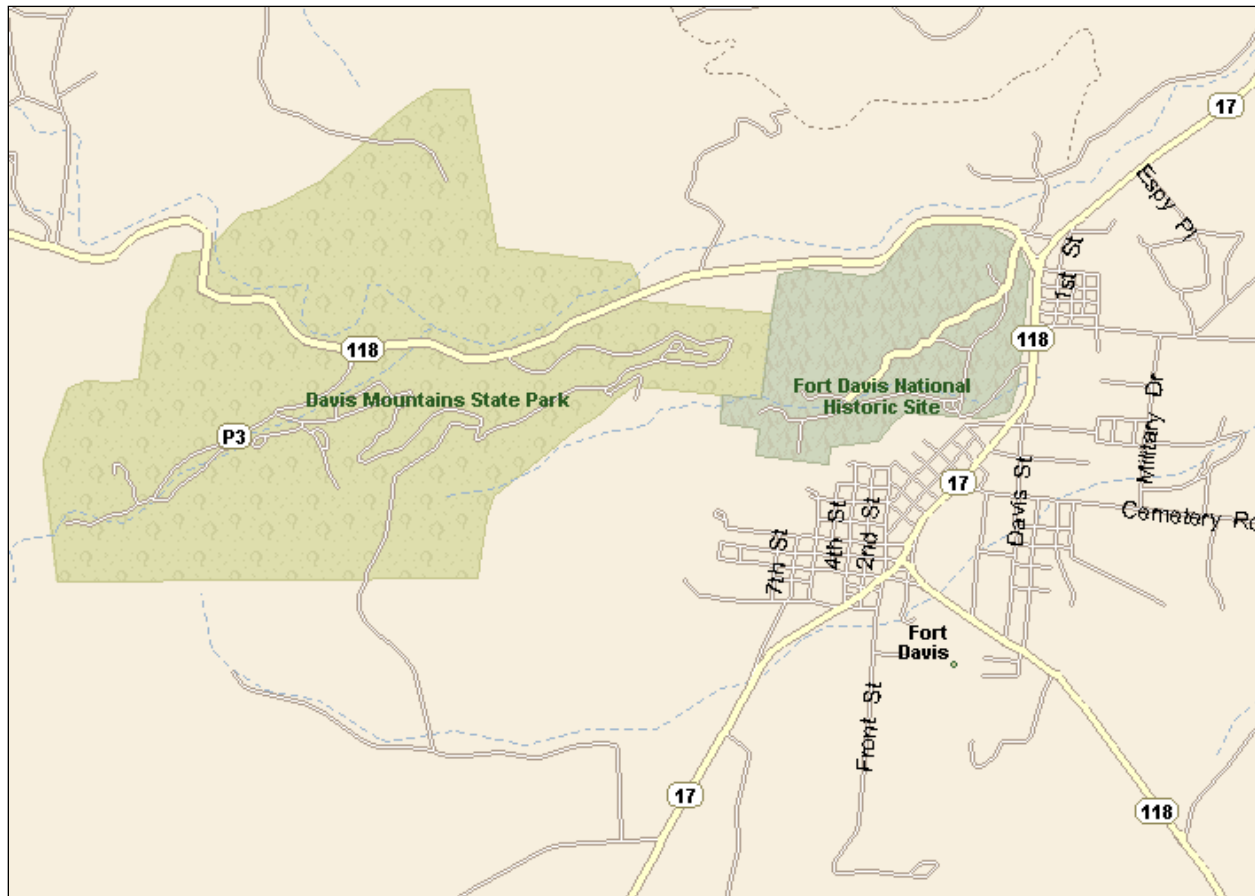


Figure 1. Map of Fort Davis *

* http://www.durangotexas.com/eyesontexas/TexasRegions/BigBendCountry/BigBendFiles/fort_davis_map.gif



Study Area

Two acoustical monitoring systems were deployed during September - October 2010. These sites were selected based on discussions between NSNSD and FODA personnel and are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Measurement site locations

Site ID	Site Name	# Days of Data	NLCD* Classification	Coordinates (latitude/longitude in decimal degrees)	Elevation (m)
FODA001	North Ridge Trail	31 days	Shrubland	30.60223° / 103.89546°	1,595 m (5,233 ft)
FODA002	Sleepy Lion Mt.	24 days	Shrubland	30.59617° / 103.89255°	1,516 m (4,975 ft)

* With the goal of potentially facilitating future data transferability between parks, all baseline acoustic data collected for the ATMP program have been organized/classified in accordance with the National Land Cover Database (NLCD). Developed by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the NLCD is the only nationally consistent land cover data set in existence and is comprised of twenty-one NLCD subclass categories for the entire U.S. (Vogelmann, J.E., S.M. Howard, L. Yang, C.R. Larson, B.K. Wylie, N. Van Driel, Completion of the 1990s National Land Cover Data Set for the Conterminous United States from Landsat Thematic Mapper Data and Ancillary Data Sources, Photogrammetric Engineering and Remote Sensing, 67:650-652, 2001.)



Methods

Larson Davis 831 sound level meters (SLM) were employed over the thirty day monitoring periods at FODA. The Larson Davis SLM is a hardware-based, real-time analyzer which constantly records one second sound pressure level (SPL) and 1/3 octave band data, and exports these data to a portable storage device (thumb drive). These Larson Davis-based sites met American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Type 1 standards.

Each Larson Davis sampling station at FODA consisted of:

- Microphone with environmental shroud
- Preamplifier
- Multiple 12V NiMH rechargeable battery packs
- Anemometer
- MP3 recorder
- Meteorological data logger
- Photo voltaic panels

Each acoustic sampling station collected:

- Sound level data in the form of A-weighted decibel readings (dBA) every second
- Continuous digital audio recordings
- One third octave band data every second ranging from 12.5 Hz – 20,000 Hz
- Meteorological data

3.2 Source Identification/Observer Logging

In characterizing natural and non-natural acoustic conditions in a park, knowledge of the intensity, duration, and distribution of the sound sources is essential. Thus, during sound-level data collection, FAA and NPS have agreed that periods of observer logging “*in situ*” (i.e., on site and in real-time) and/or post measurements using high-quality digital recordings will be conducted in order to discern the type, timing, and duration of different sound sources. *In situ* observer logging takes full advantage of human binaural hearing capabilities, allows identification of sound source origin, simultaneous sound sources, and directionality, and closely matches the experience of park visitors. Off-site audio playback observer logging allows for sampling periodically throughout the entire measurement period (e.g., 10 seconds every 2 minutes) and repeated playback of the recordings (e.g. when the sound is difficult to identify). Bose Quiet Comfort Noise Canceling headphones were used for off-site audio playback to minimize limitations imposed by the office acoustic environment.

3.3 Calculation of Sound Level Descriptors

All sound-level data were analyzed in terms of the following metrics (refer to the Glossary section for definitions):

- L_{Aeq} : The equivalent sound level determined by the logarithmic average of sound levels of a specific time period;
- L_{50} : A statistical descriptor describing the sound level exceeded 50 percent of a specific time period (i.e., the median); and



- L_{90} : A statistical descriptor describing the sound level exceeded 90 percent of a specific time period and only the quietest 10 percent of the sample can be found below this point.

For each descriptor, both the broadband A-weighted sound level is determined and its associated 1/3-octave band un-weighted spectrum from 12.5 to 20,000 Hz. The process of computing the un-weighted one-third octave-band spectrum is virtually identical to the process for computing the broadband A-weighted sound level descriptors. The only difference is that the sound-level value is computed for un-weighted frequency-based sound levels rather than for broadband A-weighted sound levels. Specifically, the un-weighted sound level is computed individually for each 1/3-octave-band. The 33 un-weighted one-third octave-band sound levels (12.5 to 20,000 Hz) define the un-weighted sound level spectrum. This method of constructing the sound level spectrum means it is not an actual measured 1/3-octave band spectrum associated with a particular measurement sample, but a composite spectrum using the computed descriptor for each 1/3-octave-band.

3.4 Definitions of Ambient

The following four types of “ambient” characterizations are generally used and considered sufficient by the FAA and NPS in environmental analyses related to transportation noise (Fleming et al. 1999, Fleming et al. 1998, Plotkin 2002):

- *Existing Ambient*: The composite, all-inclusive sound associated with a given environment, excluding only the analysis system’s electrical noise (i.e., aircraft-related sounds are included);
- *Existing Ambient Without Source of Interest*: The composite, all-inclusive sound associated with a given environment, excluding the analysis system’s electrical noise and the sound source of interest, in this case, commercial air tour aircraft;
- *Existing Ambient Without All Aircraft* (for use in assessing cumulative impacts): The composite, all-inclusive sound associated with a given environment, excluding the analysis system’s electrical noise and the sounds produced by the sound source of interest, in this case, all types of aircraft (i.e. commercial air tours, commercial jets, general aviation aircraft, military aircraft, and agricultural operations);* and
- *Natural Ambient*: The natural sound conditions found in a study area, including all sounds of nature (i.e., wind, streams, wildlife, etc.), and excluding all human and mechanical sounds.

If one considers the three sound level descriptors presented in Section 6.1 and the four types of ambient characterizations above, twelve ambient descriptors could potentially be computed as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Matrix of twelve potential ambient descriptors

Metric	Ambient Type			
	Existing	Existing Without Air Tours	Existing Without All Aircraft	Natural
L_{Aeq}	1	4	7	10
L_{50}	2	5	8	11
L_{90}	3	6	9	12

* The definition of Existing Ambient Without All Aircraft used in this report is consistent with FAA’s historical approach for cumulative impact analysis.



From the above twelve potential ambient descriptors, only the first three can be readily computed. The computation of ambient types other than Existing Ambient is more challenging because different sound sources often overlap in both frequency and amplitude; there is currently no practical method to separate out acoustic energy of different sound sources (i.e., human-caused sounds imbedded with natural sounds). The two ambient descriptors agreed upon for use in ATMP analyses are:

- Existing Ambient Without Source of Interest ($L_{\text{Existw/oTours}}$) – Descriptor 5 from the table above; and
- Natural Ambient (L_{Nat}) – Descriptor 11 from the table above.

3.5 Calculation of Ambients

From the twelve potential ambient descriptors in Table 5, only the first three can be readily computed. The computation of ambient types other than Existing Ambient is more challenging because different sound sources often overlap in both frequency and amplitude; there is currently no practical method to separate out acoustic energy of different sound sources (i.e., human-caused sounds imbedded with natural sounds). Using the data in the acoustic observer logs, different characterizations of ambient can be *estimated* from the sound level data. This method was developed by performing a detailed data analyses conducted by the Volpe Center, working closely with the NPS, in comparing several approaches of estimating of the Natural Ambient and is comprised of the following steps (Rapoza et al. 2008):

1. From the short-term in situ and off-site logging, determine the percent time human-caused sounds are audible.
2. Sort, high-to-low, the A-weighted level data, derived from the short-term, one-second, one-third octave-band data (regardless of acoustic state), and remove the loudest percentage (determined from the percent time audible of human-caused sounds in the short-term observer logs) of sound-level data. For example, if from Step 1 above, it is determined that at a particular site, the percent time audible of all human-caused sounds is 40 percent, then the loudest 40 percent of the A-weighted level data is removed. The L_{50} computed from the remaining data is the estimated A-weighted natural ambient. This L_{50} , computed from the remaining data, can be mathematically expressed as an L_x of the entire dataset as follows (%TA is the percent of time human-caused sounds are audible in the short-term observer logs):

$$L_x = \frac{100 - \%TA}{2} + \%TA$$

For example, if non-natural sounds are audible for 40% of the time, L_0 to L_{40} corresponds to the loudest (generally non-natural) sounds, and L_{40} to L_{100} corresponds to the quietest (generally natural) sounds. The median of L_{40} to L_{100} data is L_{70} . Therefore, the A-weighted decibel value at L_{70} , the sound level exceeded 70 percent of the time, would be used for the entire dataset to characterize the natural ambient sound level.

3. The associated one-third octave-band un-weighted spectrum from 12.5 to 20,000 Hz is constructed similarly, except the L_{50} is computed from the remaining data for each one-third octave-band. As with the Volpe method, it is not an actual measured one-third octave-band spectrum associated with a particular measurement sample, but rather a composite spectrum derived from the L_x for each one-third octave-band.



This method for estimating the natural ambient is conceptually straightforward – as percent time audible approaches 0 percent, the L_x approaches L_{50} ; as it approaches 100 percent, the L_x approaches L_{100} . A concern with this approach is that loud natural sounds, such as thunder, could be removed from the data before calculating natural ambient sound levels, and the resulting calculated natural ambient sound levels could be an under-estimate of natural ambient sound levels. Although this is a valid concern, such events are rare relative to the entire measurement period (>25 days). Therefore, removing these data should not likely have a significant impact on calculations of natural ambient sound levels. This method also eliminates the possibility of having an estimated natural ambient level that exceeds the existing ambient level.

Based on the concept of the above method, the computation of the other ambient types (Existing Without Sound Source of Interest using the percentage of time sounds from the source of interest, e.g., air tour aircraft, are audible from short-term in situ and off-site observer logging, and Existing Ambient Without All Aircraft using the percentage of time all aircraft are audible from the observer logging) is a similar process.



Results

This section summarizes the results of the study. Included is an overall summary of the final, ambient sound levels for each measurement site, Time Above analysis, temporal trends, and the acoustic observer data logged at each measurement site.

4.1 Summary Results

The following figures and tables are presented to show overall site-to-site comparisons:

- Figure 2: A plot of the overall daytime* L_{50} sound level computed for each site with all days included for the summer season (a few points of interest outside the parks are also shown for comparison purposes only). The figure also shows a dark line above and below each plotting symbol, which indicate the 95% confidence interval on the results[†];
- Table 6 presents a tabular summary of daytime and nighttime and computed ambients for the summer season; and
- Table 7, Figure 3 and Figure 4 present the associated spectral data for these ambient maps.

* For most parks, the majority of air tour operations occur during the day, the NPS and FAA have agreed that the impact assessment will be conducted using ambient sound levels during the time that the air tour operations occur. Accordingly, all ATMP analyses are based on daytime ambient data. In general, daytime refers to the time period of 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. unless otherwise specified by the NPS and FAA.

[†] The confidence interval is a measure of how certain one is of the value shown. The length of each of the dark lines indicate the day-to-day variability of the measurement for a particular site - the longer the line, the larger the day-to-day variability.

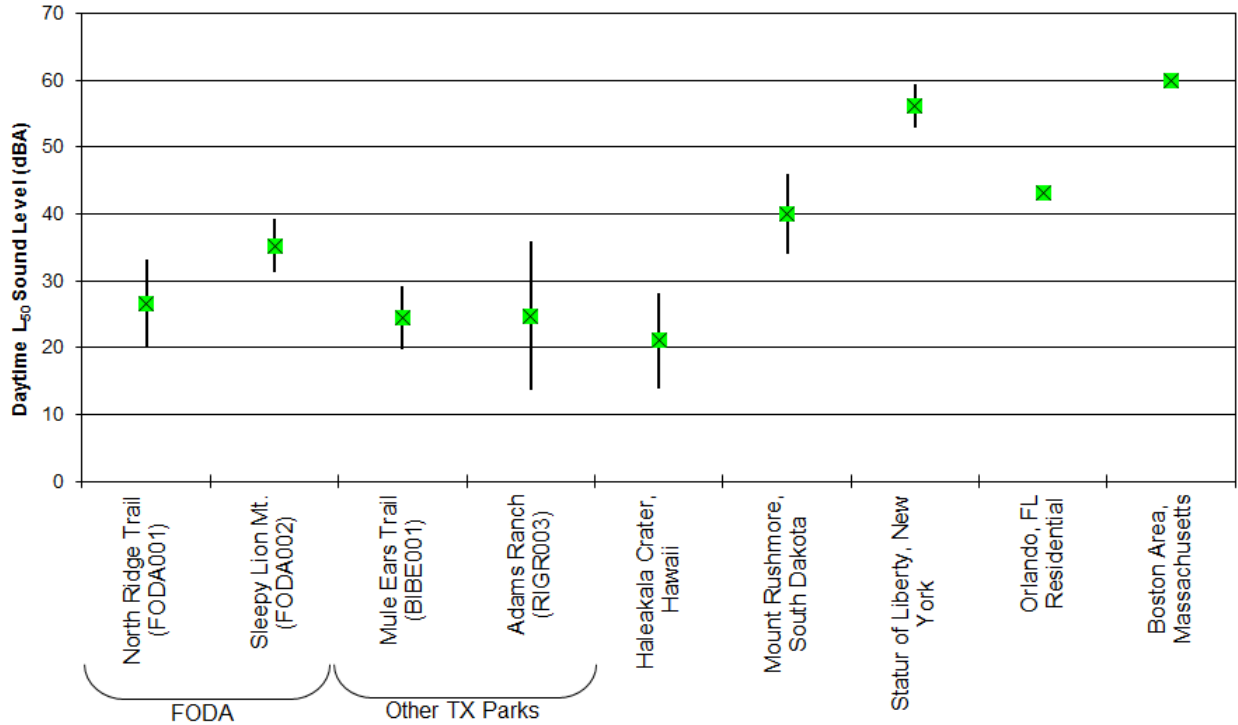


Figure 2. Comparison of overall daytime L₅₀ sound levels for all sites*

* Confidence intervals for Orlando and Boston are not shown due to the limited amount of data represented (2 days and 1 week, respectively). Ambient data at ATMP parks, such as Fort Union, are typically measured for at least 25 days.



Table 6. Summary of ambient sound level data *

Site ID	Site Name	Total # Days	Existing Ambient						Existing Ambient Without Air Tours (Daytime Data 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.)	Existing Ambient Without All Aircraft (Daytime Data 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.)	Natural Ambient (Daytime Data 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.)
			Daytime Data Only: 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.			Nighttime Data Only: 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.					
			L _{Aeq} (dBA)	L ₅₀ (dBA)	L ₉₀ (dBA)	L _{Aeq} (dBA)	L ₅₀ (dBA)	L ₉₀ (dBA)	L ₅₀ (dBA)	L ₅₀ (dBA)	L ₅₀ (dBA)
FODA001	North Ridge Trail	31	34.5	26.6	21.0	43.6	37.8	25.6	26.5	26.4	25.2
FODA002	Sleepy Lion Mt.	24	40.6	35.2	30.2	48.3	44.9	32.1	35.2	35.2	32.3

* As stated earlier, two ambient maps were agreed upon for use in ATMP analyses: the Existing Ambient Without Air Tours (L₅₀) and the Natural Ambient (L₅₀).

Table 7. Summary of measured, daytime (7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.), ambient sound level spectral data *

Frequency (Hz)	Existing Ambient Without Air Tours L ₅₀ (dB)		Natural Ambient L ₅₀ (dB)	
	FODA001	FODA002	FODA001	FODA002
12.5	38.5	38.9	36.1	35.5
16	36.0	38.2	34.2	35.6
20	33.7	38.4	32.0	36.1
25	31.8	39.4	30.7	37.1
31	31.5	44.1	30.6	43.0
40	30.9	39.6	30.1	37.2
50	30.7	38.4	29.7	35.4
63	31.4	37.4	30.5	34.1
80	30.6	36.1	29.6	33.0
100	28.1	33.9	27.2	30.9
125	26.2	30.2	25.2	27.4
160	22.5	24.6	21.7	21.8
200	20.9	22.9	19.8	20.2
250	18.7	21.4	17.6	19.2
315	17.3	22.2	16.4	19.8
400	17.0	23.6	15.8	21.0
500	16.7	25.0	15.7	22.7
630	16.8	26.0	16.0	23.6
800	17.5	26.3	16.6	24.1
1000	16.8	25.4	15.7	22.8
1250	14.1	23.7	12.9	20.8
1600	10.7	21.0	9.7	18.5
2000	8.0	18.3	7.0	15.7
2500	6.6	15.6	5.9	13.6
3150	6.4	14.3	5.0	12.3
4000	6.3	13.0	5.2	10.9
5000	6.9	12.5	5.9	10.9
6300	7.2	12.1	6.1	10.8
8000	7.4	12.8	6.3	11.4
10000	8.0	14.3	6.9	12.7
12500	8.0	17.1	6.7	15.4
16000	8.3	19.6	7.8	17.8
20000	6.1	21.0	4.9	19.1

* As discussed in Section 3.5, the spectral data associated with the L₅₀ exceedence level is constructed by determining the L₅₀ from each one-third octave-band; therefore, it is not an actual measured one-third octave-band spectrum associated with a particular measurement sample.

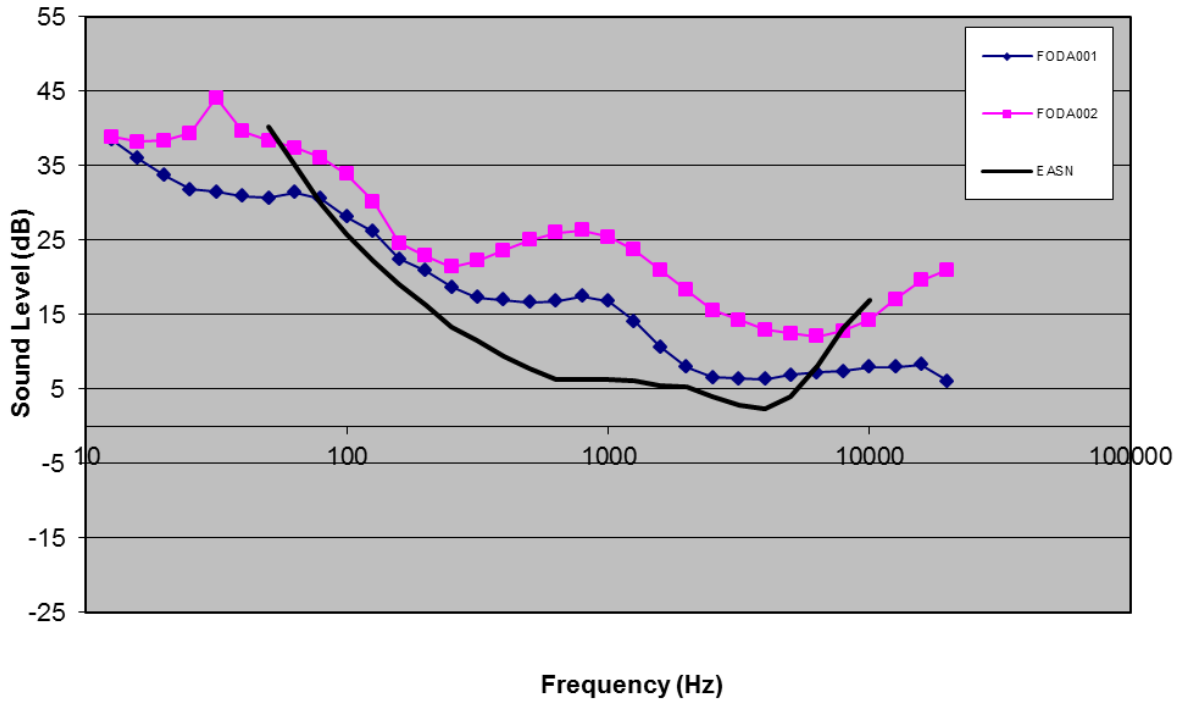
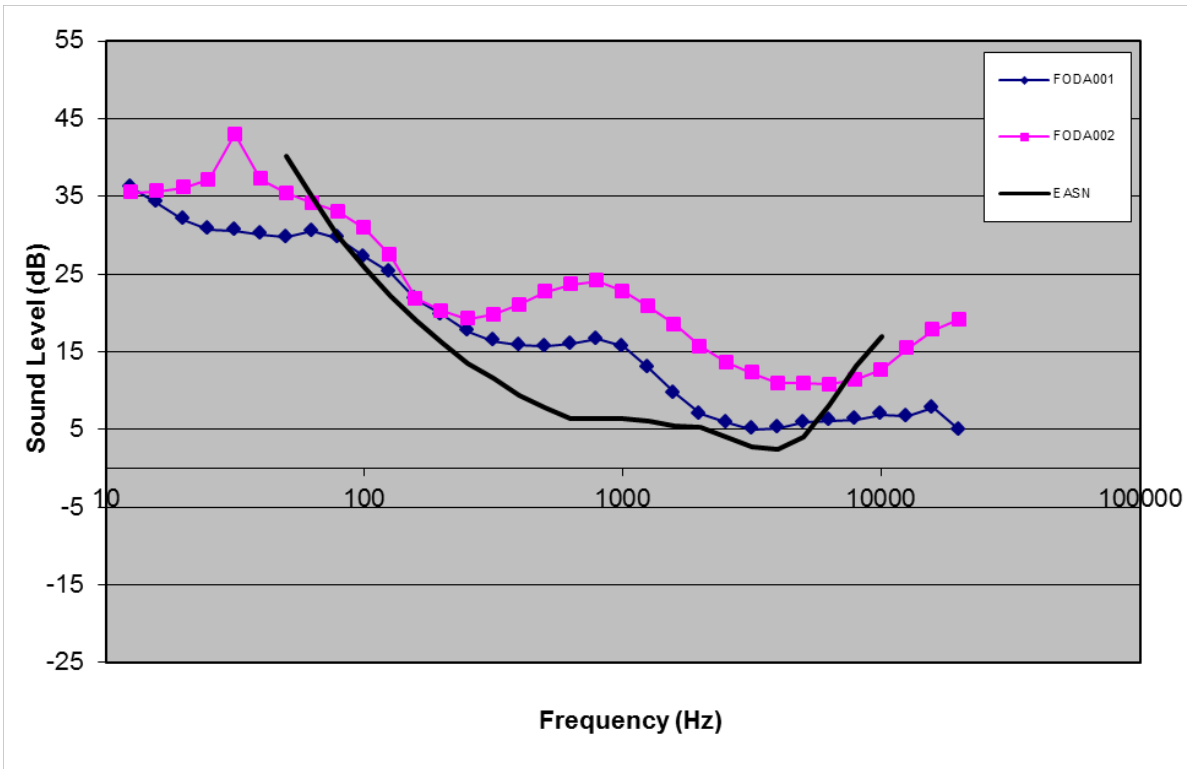


Figure 3. Spectral data for the Existing Ambient Without Air Tours (L_{50}) for each site*



* Also shown in each figure is the Equivalent Auditory System Noise (EASN), which represents the threshold of human hearing for use in modeling audibility using one-third octave-band data.



Figure 4. Spectral data for the Natural Ambient (L_{50}) determined for each site*

4.2 Time Above Results

The Time Above metric indicates the amount of time that the sound level exceeds specified decibel values. In determining the current conditions of an acoustical environment, the NPS examines how often sound pressure levels exceed certain decibel values that relate to human health and speech. The NPS uses these values for making comparisons, but should not be construed as thresholds of impact. Table 8 reports the percent of time that measured levels were above four decibel values at each of the FODA measurement locations for the summer season. The first decibel value, 35 dBA, addresses the health effects of sleep interruption (Haralabidis et al. 2008). The second value addresses the World Health Organization’s recommendations that noise levels inside bedrooms remain below 45 dBA (Berglund et al. 1999). The third value, 52 dBA, is based on the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA 1974) speech interference threshold for speaking in a raised voice to an audience at 10 meters. This value addresses the effects of sound on interpretive presentations in parks. The final value, 60 dBA, provides a basis for estimating impacts on normal voice communications at 1 m (3 ft). Hikers and visitors viewing scenic vistas in the park would likely be conducting such conversations.

Table 8. Percent Time Above Metrics (dBA)

Site ID	Site Name	% Time above sound level: 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.				% Time above sound level: 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.			
		35 dBA	45 dBA	52 dBA	60 dBA	35 dBA	45 dBA	52 dBA	60 dBA
FODA001	North Ridge Trail	6.86	0.48	0.04	0.00	66.88	21.43	0.02	0.00
FODA002	Sleepy Lion Mt.	45.95	7.02	0.19	0.00	87.39	52.16	10.79	0.00

Table 9. Percent Time Above Metrics Truncated (dBT)

Site ID	Site Name	% Time above sound level: 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.				% Time above sound level: 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.			
		35 dBT	45 dBT	52 dBT	60 dBT	35 dBT	45 dBT	52 dBT	60 dBT
FODA001	North Ridge Trail	4.86	0.24	0.03	0.01	1.08	0.02	0.01	0.01
FODA002	Sleepy Lion Mt.	30.73	4.75	0.08	0.00	10.57	0.30	0.01	0.00

4.3 Temporal Trends

This section discusses the daily and diurnal trends of the data. Daily trends are shown on a 24-hour basis. Figure 5 presents the daily median Existing Ambient (i.e., the L_{50} with all sounds included) for the summer season. For the purpose of assessing daily trends in the data, sound level descriptors are computed for each individual hour; then the median from the 24 hours each day is determined. Dips and increases in daily sound levels are usually an indication of passing inclement weather and localized events (e.g., tropical storm). This data is useful in visually identifying potential anomalies in the data. Data anomalies would then be further examined from data recorded by the sound level meter and/or recorded audio samples.

Diurnal trends are shown on an hourly basis. Sites with a strong daytime diurnal pattern typically indicate the presence of human activity largely influencing the sound levels at those sites. Sites with a nighttime pattern typically indicate the presence of insect activity. Sites with little discernible pattern, e.g., somewhat constant across all hours, typically indicate a constant sound source. Examples of



constant sound sources include a running river, generators or shoreline surf. This data is also useful in visually identifying potential anomalies in the data.

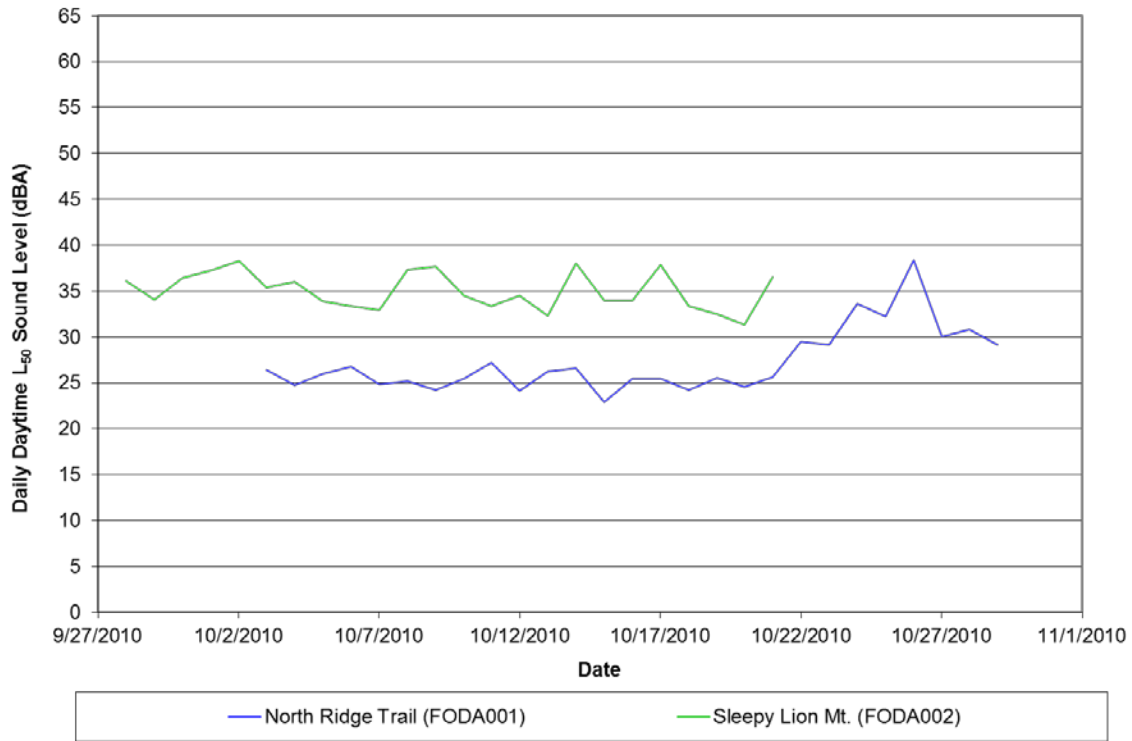


Figure 5. Comparison of daily L_{50} sound levels for all sites

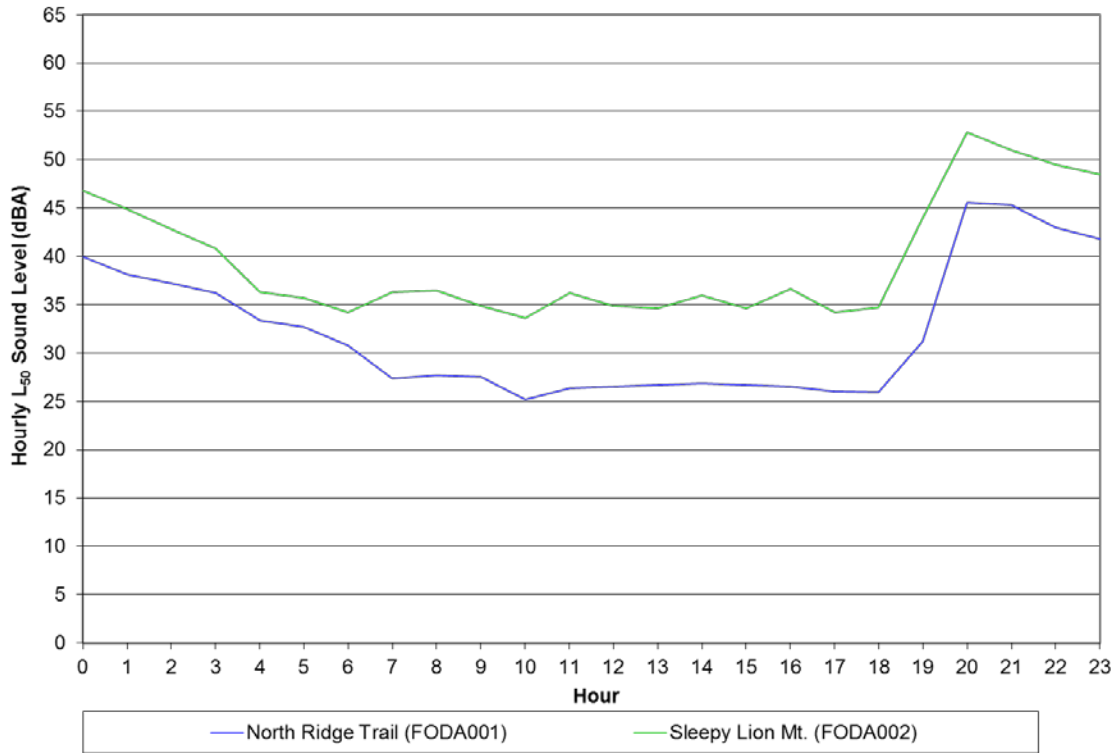


Figure 6. Comparison of hourly L₅₀ sound levels for all sites

4.4 Acoustic Observer Logging Results

Table 10 summarizes the office listening and in-situ logging results and provide an indication of the amount of time that certain sources are present at each site. The in-situ logging occurs at the site itself and consists of an observer that logs the time and duration of sounds that they hear at the site. Typically a limited amount of in-situ logging is available due to logistics of the measurement and the days that the acoustic team is in the area. The office listening results are from a review of the audio files that were collected at each site. Continuous audio files were collected for the entire measurement and this allows a greater ability to listen and log sound sources for several days and any time period. Table 10 summarizes the combined in situ and office listening results for the summer measurements, These are the results determined from a review of the observer logs recorded on site and office logs from a review of recorded audio files.

Table 10. Summary of combined in-situ and office acoustic observer log data for all sites

Site ID	Site Name	# Days of Listening	% Time Audible			
			Fixed-Wing Aircraft and Helicopters	Other Aircraft Sounds	Other Human Sounds	Natural Sounds
FODA001	North Ridge Trail	9	1.2	0.1	86.5	12.2
FODA002	Sleepy Lion Mt.	8	1.5	6.3	60.5	31.8



Ambient Mapping

Using the ambient data measured at each site, a comprehensive grid of ambient sound levels throughout the park (i.e., an ambient “map”) is developed. Ambient maps are useful to: (1) graphically characterize the ambient environment throughout an entire study area; and (2) to establish baseline, or background values in computer modeling. For ATMPs, the FAA’s INM* will be used to model air tour aircraft activities and compute various noise-related descriptors (e.g., percentage of time aircraft sounds are above the ambient) and generate the sound-level contours that will be used in the assessment of potential noise impacts due to air tour operations.

The development of ambient maps is accomplished using Geographic Information System (GIS). In GIS, the following actions are performed:

- Define the input “objects”:
 - Define the park boundary in Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM)[†] coordinates to set the initial grid area boundary.[‡]
 - Divide the park into a regular grid of points at a desired spacing using a Digital Elevation Model (DEM), which is a digital representation of a topographic surface typically used in GIS applications. Each point is assigned an elevation value and UTM coordinates from the DEM. For FODA, a grid spacing of 500 ft (152.4 m) was used.
 - Define the acoustic zone boundaries in UTM coordinates (see Section 5.1).
 - Define the location of each measurement site.
- Assign a “measured” ambient sound level (and its associated one-third octave-band, unweighted spectrum) computed in Section 4.1, to each acoustic zone.

For development of all ambient maps, except for Natural Ambient, three additional steps are performed:

- Define the location of localized noise sources, primarily vehicles on roads, but may also include trains, waterfalls, and river rapids. The closest distance to each source is calculated and assigned to each grid point.
- Assign an ambient sound level (and its associated one-third octave-band, unweighted spectrum) for each roadway to each grid point using the drop-off rates determined by computer modeling discussed in Section 5.2.
- Compute a combined measured and roadway ambient (and spectra). This is performed by using energy-addition, i.e., sound levels in decibels were converted to energy prior to addition.

* For ATMPs, the FAA and NPS have agreed to use the INM. The INM is a computer program used by over 700 organizations in over 50 countries to assess changes in noise impact. Requirements for INM use are defined in FAA Order 1050.1E, Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures, and Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR) Part 150, Airport Noise Compatibility Planning. In accordance with the results of the Federal Interagency Committee on Aviation Noise (FICAN) review (“Findings and Recommendations on Tools for Modeling Aircraft Noise in National Parks”), INM Version 6.2 is the best-practice modeling methodology currently available for evaluating aircraft noise in national parks and will be the model used for ATMP development.

[†] The UTM system provides coordinates on a worldwide flat grid for easy manipulation in GIS applications.

[‡] Because the ATMP Act applies to all commercial air tour operations within the ½-mile outside the boundary of a national park, the park boundary includes a ½-mile buffer.



The final ambient maps are presented in Section 5.3.

5.1 Define Acoustic Zones and Assignment of Ambient Data

Because it is neither economically nor expeditiously feasible to manually collect noise data under all possible conditions throughout an entire park, areas of like vegetation, topography, elevation, and climate were grouped into “acoustic zones,” with the assumption that similar wildlife, physical processes, and other sources of natural sounds occur in similar areas with similar attributes. The primary goal of the site selection process was to identify the minimum number of field-measurement sites, which would allow for characterization of the baseline ambient sound levels throughout the entire park by assigning measured data stratified to these acoustic zones. The following considerations are used in the determination of acoustic zones:

- **Vegetation/Land Cover:** Sound propagates differently over different types of ground cover and through different types of vegetation. For example, sound propagates more freely over barren environments as compared with grasslands, and less freely through forest type environments. In addition, vegetation is typically dependent upon time-of-year, with foliage being sparser in the winter than other times in the year. Land cover can also affect wildlife activity.
- **Climate Conditions:** Climate conditions (temperature, humidity, precipitation, wind speed, wind direction, etc.) can also affect ambient sound levels. For example, higher elevation areas typically exhibit higher wind speeds resulting in higher ambient sound levels. Climate is also dependent upon daily and seasonal variations, which can affect ambient sound levels. For example, under conditions of a temperature inversion (temperature increasing with increasing height as in winter and at sundown), sound waves may be heard over larger distances; and winds tend to increase later in the day, and, as such, may be expected to contribute to higher ambient noise levels in the afternoon as compared with the morning.
- **Park Resources/Management Zones:** Park resources contribute, not only, to the multitude of sounds produced in certain areas of the park, but also to the serenity of other areas in the park. The way in which a park manages its resources can affect how potential impacts may be later assessed. It may also help identify where greater resource protection may be needed.

Based on the above considerations, Figure 7 presents the acoustic zones that were developed and the location of the measurement sites for FODA. The ATMP Act applies to all commercial air tour operations within the ½-mile outside the boundary of a national park. Table 11 presents which measurement site data were applied to each acoustic zone. Note: The line shown in Figure 7 separating the park into two sections defines how the site data for FODA001 and FODA002 were assigned.

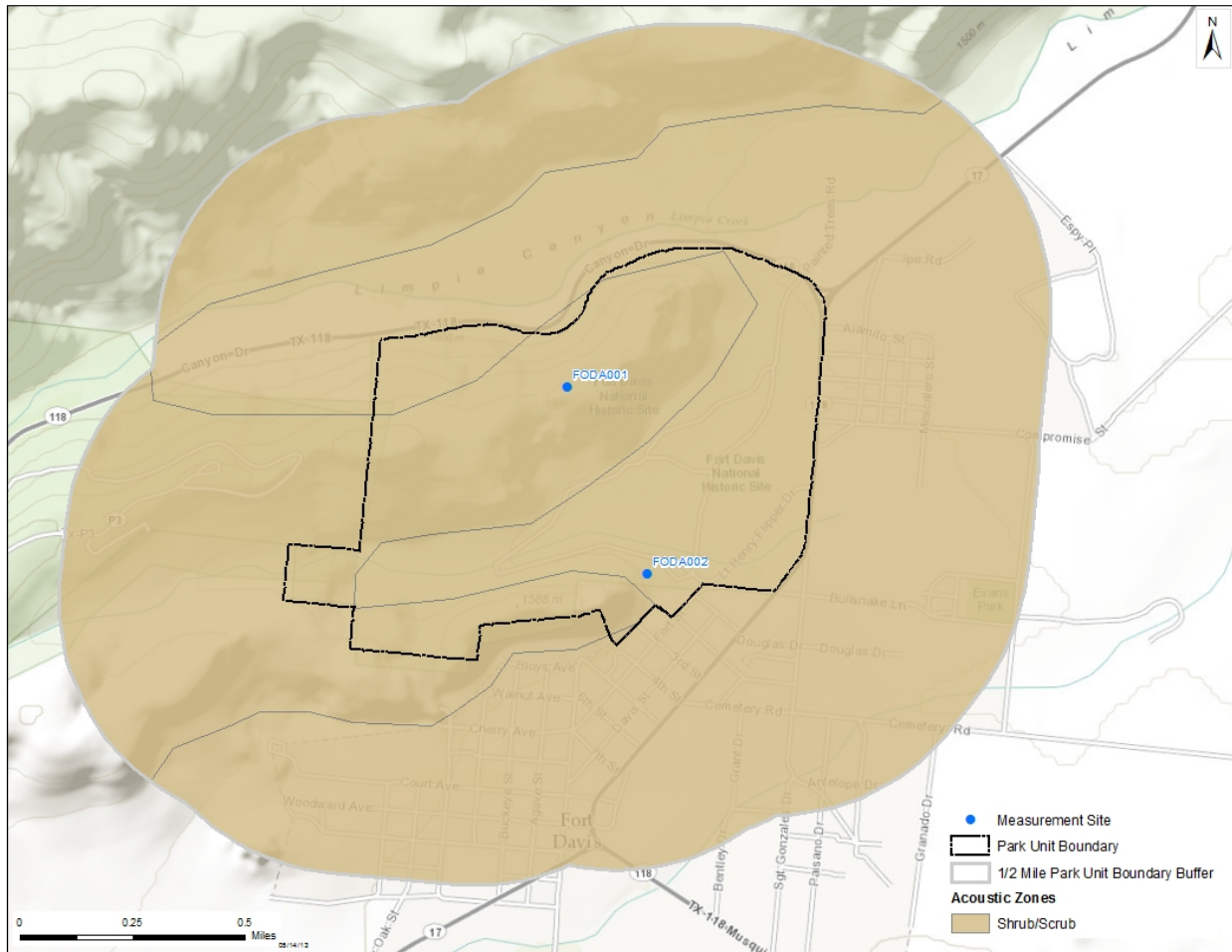


Figure 7. Acoustic zones and measurement sites for FODA

Table 11. Assignment of ambient data to acoustic zones

Acoustic Zone	Site ID	Site Name
Shrubland	FODA001	North Ridge Trail
Shrubland	FODA002	Sleepy Lion Mt.

5.2 Ambient Mapping of Localized Sound Sources

The contributing effect of localized noise sources, primarily vehicles on roads, but may also include trains, waterfalls, and river rapids, are typically modeled and combined with the measured sound levels to develop a composite, baseline, ambient “map” of a park for all ambient maps, except natural ambient (see Table 12). The combined (measured plus roadway, for example) ambient are computed by using energy-addition, i.e., sound levels in decibels were converted to energy prior to addition. Roadway sound sources were modeled using the Federal Highway Administration’s Traffic Noise Model® (TNM) (Lee et al. 2004), where the estimated drop-off rate, reflecting a continuous decrease in sound level as a function of increasing distance from each sound source, was computed. For a non-time-varying source, such as roadway noise, the TNM-computed L_{Aeq} sound level parameters may be conservatively assumed to be equivalent to the L_{50} and L_{90} and, thus, used interchangeably as the “roadway” ambient.



Table 12. Composite ambient maps

Metric	Ambient Type			
	Existing	Existing Without Air Tours	Existing Without All Aircraft	Natural
L ₅₀	Measured + Localized Noise Source(s)	Measured + Localized Noise Source(s)	Measured + Localized Noise Source(s)	Measured

In the vicinity of and within FODA, there were a number of roadways. The following general assumptions were made in the modeling:

- Roadway Traffic Volumes – Annual traffic volume on each roadway was determined using data collected by NPS and Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT). The TXDOT Map and the NPS 2004 Traffic Report provided AADT data (http://www.txdot.gov/travel/traffic_maps/2009.htm and http://www.efl.fhwa.dot.gov/files/programs/nps-traffic-data/2004_NPS_Traffic_Data_Report.pdf). Where data are available for multiple years, the most current year was chosen. The traffic volume for an average day during the actual summer month (May) and the peak winter month (January) was obtained by using monthly visitation data obtained from the NPS Public Use Statistics Office website (<http://www2.nature.nps.gov/stats/>) to apportion the TXDOT annual traffic. Hourly volume is estimated by dividing the month’s volume by the number of days in the month (31) and by 12 hours per day, which assumes the majority of traffic for Fort Davis occurs between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. – typical commute hours.
- Roadway Traffic Mix and Speeds –The traffic mix and speeds on a given roadway were based on two sources: (1) The NPS Monthly Usage information (<http://nature.nps.gov/stats/viewReport.cfm?selectedReport=ParkMonthlyReport.cfm>); and (2) observations by field personnel during site visits. In some cases, a specific speed limit was determined using Google Maps using the “street view” to view an actual speed limit sign. When multiple speed limit signs showed varying speeds over a single road segment, an average. In some specific cases, notations from the Volpe field notes en route to measurement site locations were used to determine speed limits over various segments. An average speed of 35 mph was assumed as the default within the park when another more specific speed limit could not be determined.
- Ground Impedance – An effective flow resistivity of 1000 cgs/rayls was used for Fort Davis.

Table 13. Estimated hourly roadway traffic volume and speed for the summer season

Roadway			Estimated Hourly Volume				
#	Name	Average Speed (mph)	Autos	Medium Trucks	Heavy Trucks	Buses	Motorcycles
1	State Hwy P3 Park Rd	30	41	2	1	0	1
2	US 118 (west of US 17)	55	52	2	1	0	2
3	US 118/ US 17 (where they join south to 5th St)	35	180	5	0	1	5
4	US 118/ US 17 (5th St south to where they split)	30	320	8	0	2	10
5	US 118 (split with US 17 to Paisano Dr)	30	165	4	0	1	5
6	US 118 (south of Paisano Dr)	55	120	3	0	1	4
7	US 17 (north of US 118)	55	88	2	0	1	3



#	Roadway Name	Average Speed (mph)	Estimated Hourly Volume				
			Autos	Medium Trucks	Heavy Trucks	Buses	Motorcycles
8	US 17 (splits with US 118 to Emory Oak St)	30	240	6	0	1	7
9	US 17 (Emory Oak St to US 166)	45	125	3	0	1	4
10	US 17 (South of US 166)	70	85	2	0	0	3
11	US 166	55	45	1	0	0	1

5.3 Final Ambient Maps

The two ambient maps agreed upon for use in ATMP analyses are:

- Existing Ambient Without Air Tours (i.e., the Source of Interest); and
- Natural Ambient.

Figure 8 and Figure 9 present the ambient maps for the summer season.

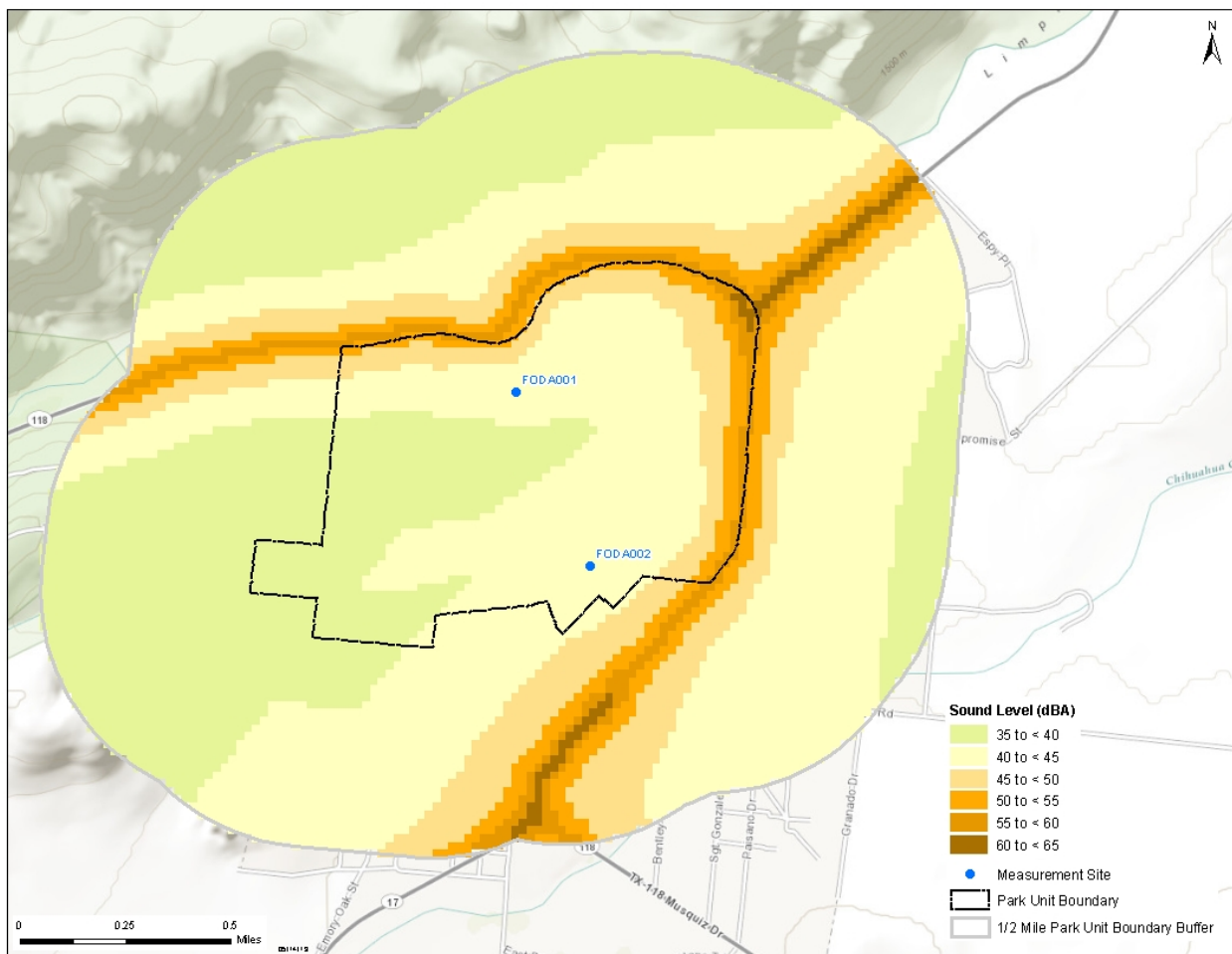


Figure 8. Baseline ambient map: Existing Ambient Without Air Tours (L₅₀)

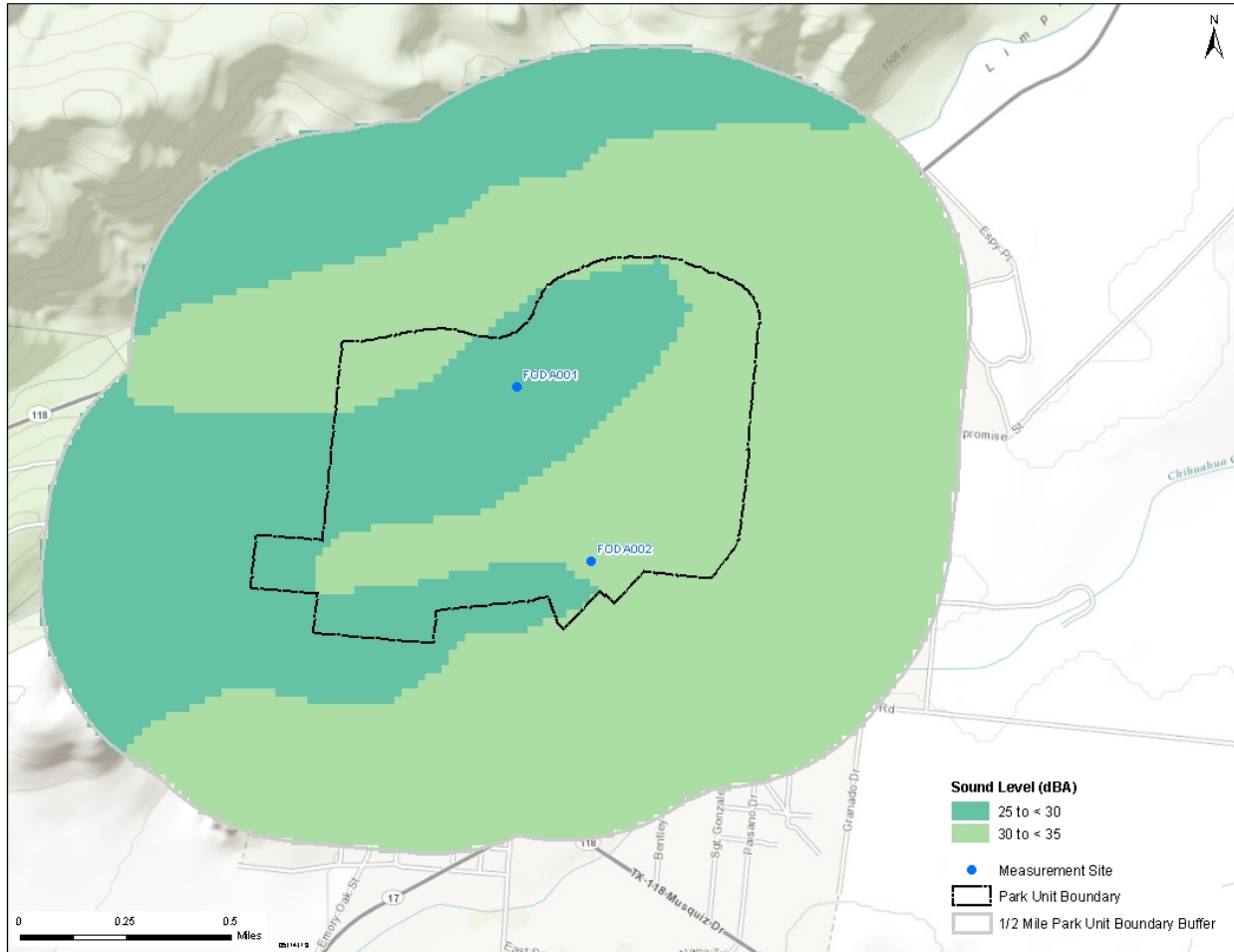


Figure 9. Baseline ambient map: Natural Ambient (L_{50})



Data for Individual Sites

This section provides more detailed information for each individual site. For each site, the following are included:

- A photograph of the measurement site and a brief discussion of preliminary observations;
- A pie chart presenting a comparison of types of sound sources that were audible during observer logging;
- A graphic presenting distribution plots of the number of 1-second samples of each sound pressure level measured during daytime and nighttime hours, and daytime/nighttime combined;
- A graphic presenting the daily sound levels using three hourly A-weighted metrics (L_{Aeq} , L_{50} , and L_{90} - refer to Section 3 for definitions), as well as average daily wind speeds over the entire measurement period;
- A graphic presenting the hourly sound levels using three hourly A-weighted metrics (L_{Aeq} , L_{50} , and L_{90} - refer to Section 3 for definitions), as well as average hourly wind speeds over the entire measurement period; and
- A graphic presenting the dB levels for each of 33 one-third octave band frequencies over the day and night periods using three hourly A-weighted metrics (L_{10} , L_{50} , and L_{90}). The L_{10} exceedence level represents the dB exceeded 10 percent of the time and 90 percent of the measurements are quieter than the L_{10} . Refer to Section 3 for definitions of L_{50} and L_{90} . The grayed area represents sound levels outside of the typical range of human hearing.



6.1 Site FODA001 – North Ridge Trail



Figure 10. Photograph of Site FODA001

Observations

The North Ridge Trail (FODA001) site was located in an elevated, rocky area with grasses and scrub on a high ridge overlooking a paved roadway. Vehicles accelerating from a nearby intersection on to the main road (S.R.118) were audible from the site.

The overall median daytime sound level during the summer was 26.6 dBA. Twenty four hour L_{50} sound levels ranged from 27 dBA to 37 dBA with louder days in correlation with higher wind conditions. Hourly L_{50} sound levels ranged from 25 dBA to 47 dBA with louder levels occurring at night and early morning hours. The frequency data indicate that insect activity was present during the night time hours.

On-site observations and off-site review of recorded audio data concluded that aircraft were audible 1% of the daytime hours at FODA001. Other human-related sounds were audible 87% of the daytime hours. The period of time where no human sounds were audible is called the “Noise-free” component of the soundscape. Noise-free time periods accounted for 12% of the daytime hours indicating a relatively high amount of human activity and human related sounds occurring in the area. Daytime natural sounds audible at this site, which may have coincided with human related sounds, were wind and wind related sounds, birds, and insect sounds.

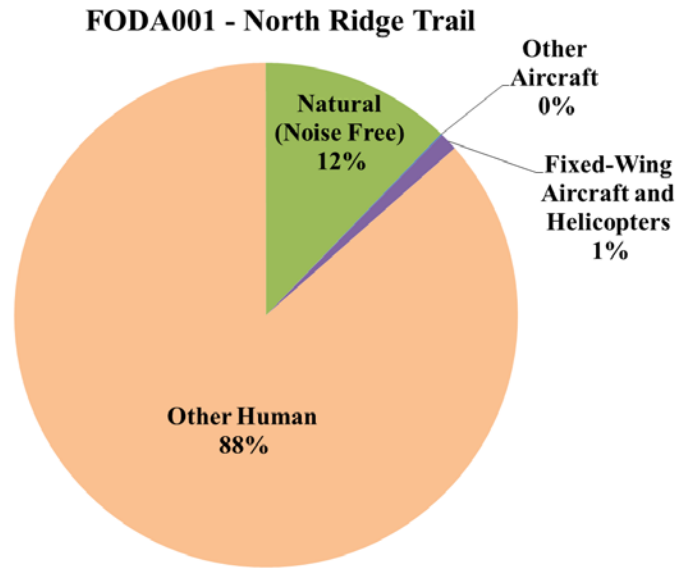


Figure 11. Distribution of sound sources audible (in situ and office listening combined) for Site FODA001

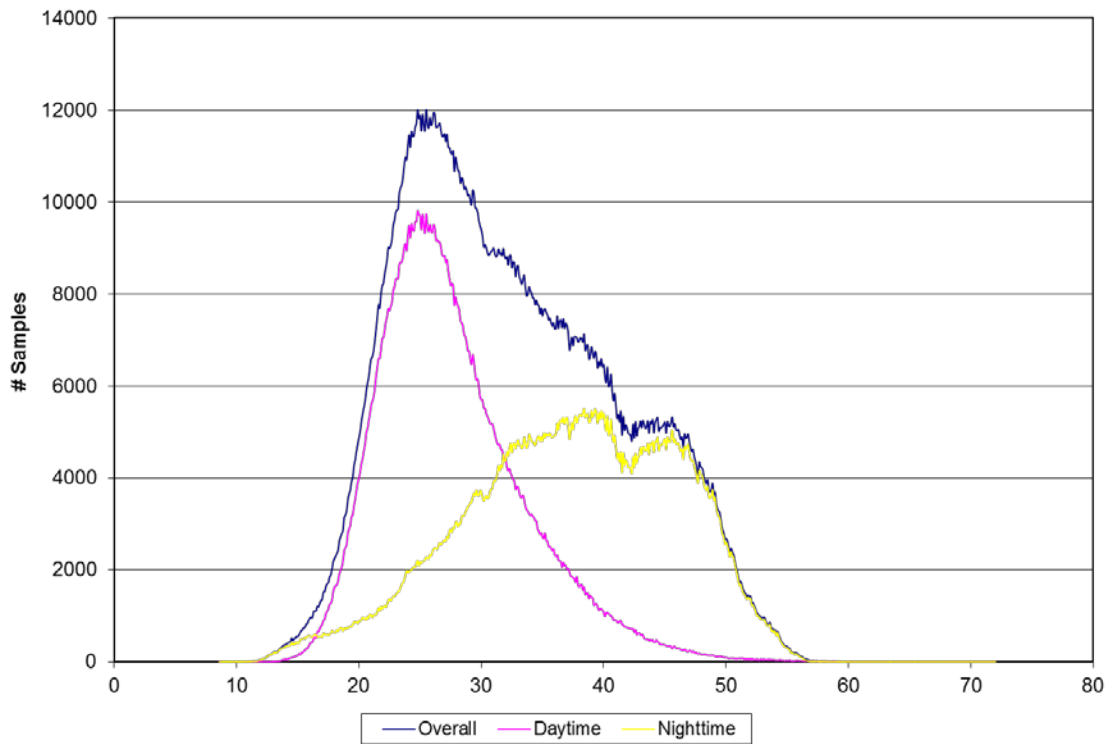


Figure 12. Distribution of data for Site FODA001

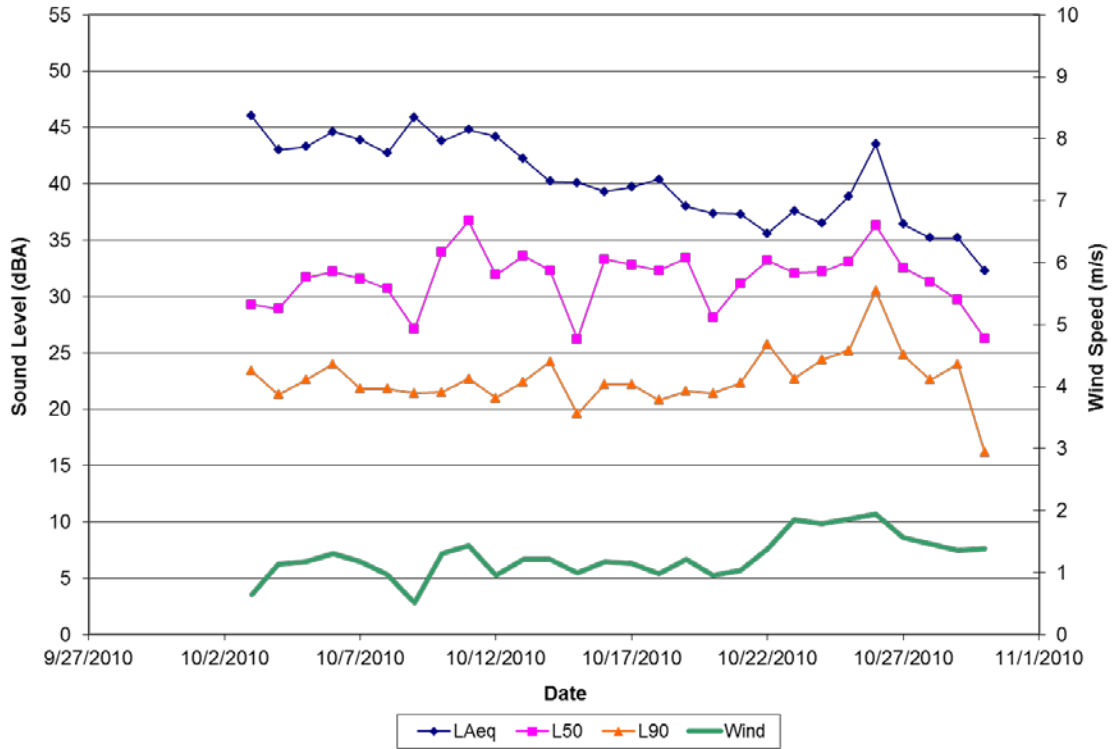


Figure 13. Daily sound levels and wind speeds for Site FODA001

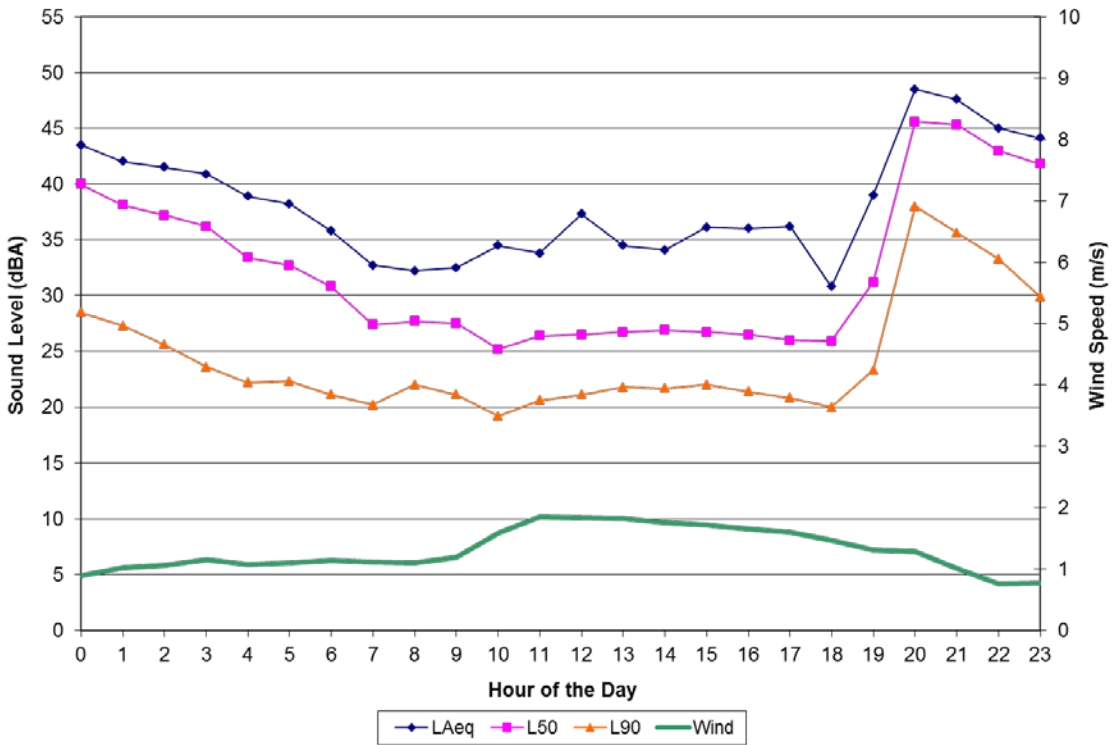


Figure 14. Hourly sound levels and wind speeds for Site FODA001

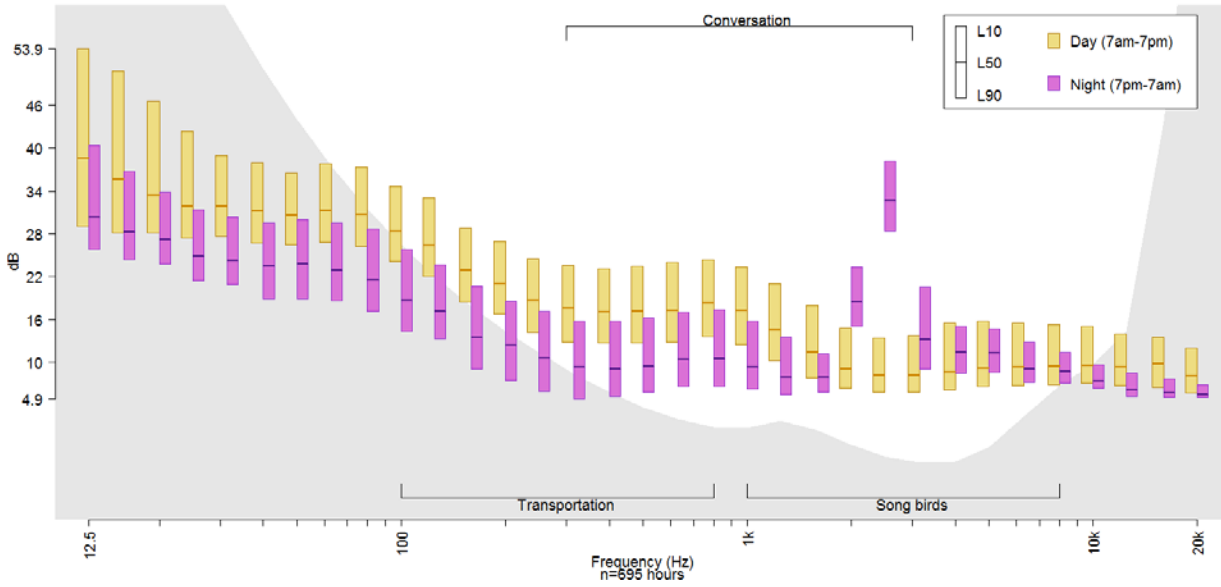


Figure 15. Sound spectrum for FODA001



6.2 Site FODA002 – Sleepy Lion Mt.



Figure 16. Photograph of Site FODA002

Observations

FODA002 is located on Sleepy Lion Mountain, overlooking Fort Davis. In a grassy area with large rocks, the site was several hundred feet from a parking lot. Amplified music from Fort Davis is audible at this location and recordings broadcast over the Fort Davis public address system are audible approximately every 15 minutes of the Fort operating hours.

The overall median daytime sound level during the summer was 35.2 dBA. Twenty four hour L_{50} sound levels ranged from 33 dBA to 44 dBA with louder days in correlation with higher wind conditions. Hourly L_{50} sound levels ranged from 34 dBA to 53 dBA with louder levels occurring at night and early morning hours. The frequency data indicate that insect activity was present during the night time hours.

On-site observations and off-site review of recorded audio data concluded that aircraft were audible 7.8% of the daytime hours. Other human related sounds were audible for 60% of the daytime hours. The period of time where no human sounds were audible is called the “Noise-free” component of the soundscape. Noise-free time periods accounted for 32% of the daytime hours, indicative of the relatively high amount of human activity and human related sound that occurred in the area. Daytime natural sounds audible at this site, which may have coincided with human related sounds, were wind and wind related sounds, birds, and insects.

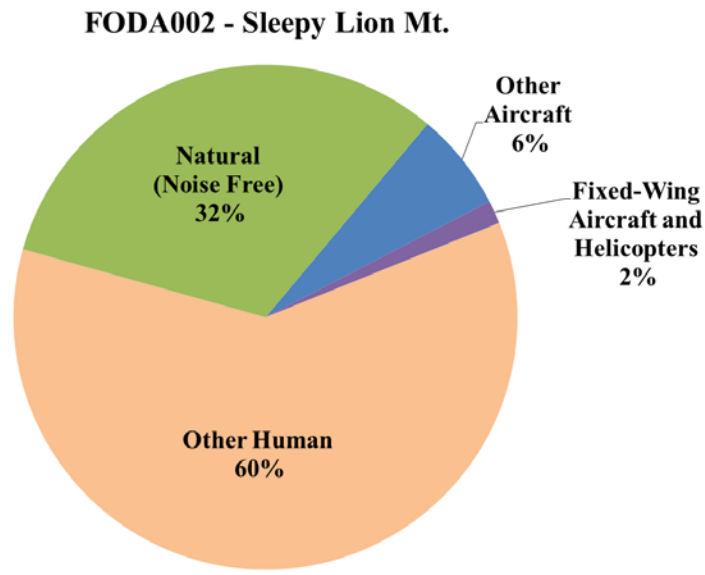


Figure 17. Distribution of sound sources audible (in situ and office listening combined) for Site FODA002

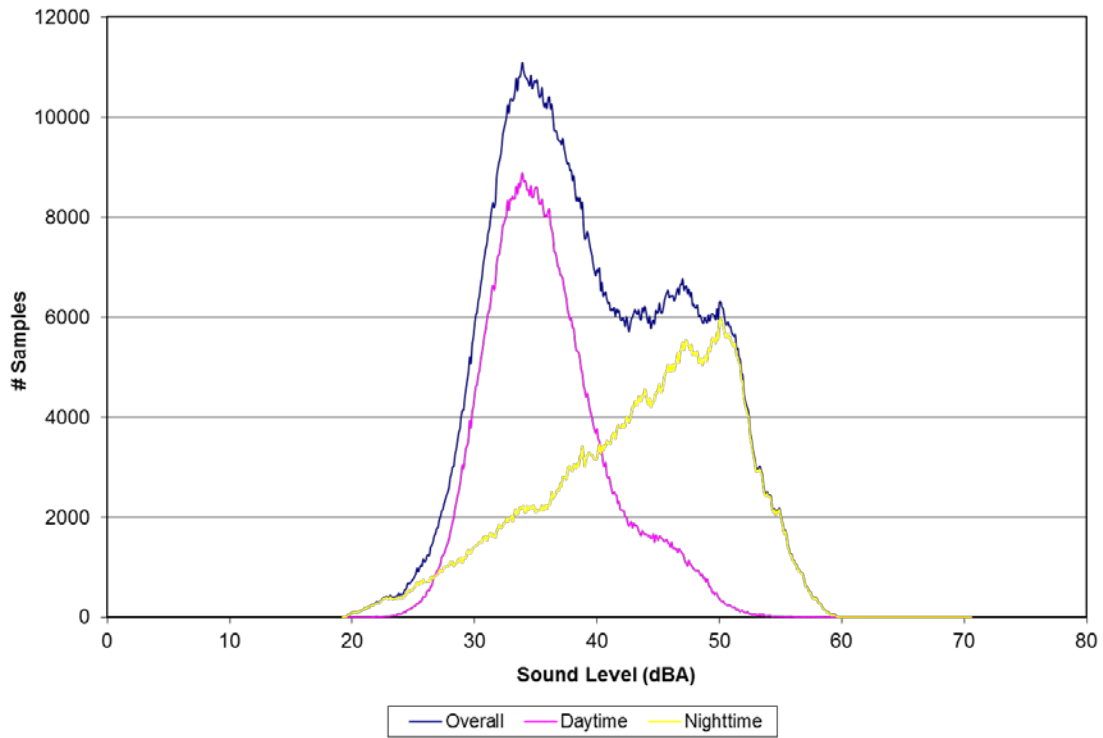


Figure 18. Distribution of data for Site FODA002

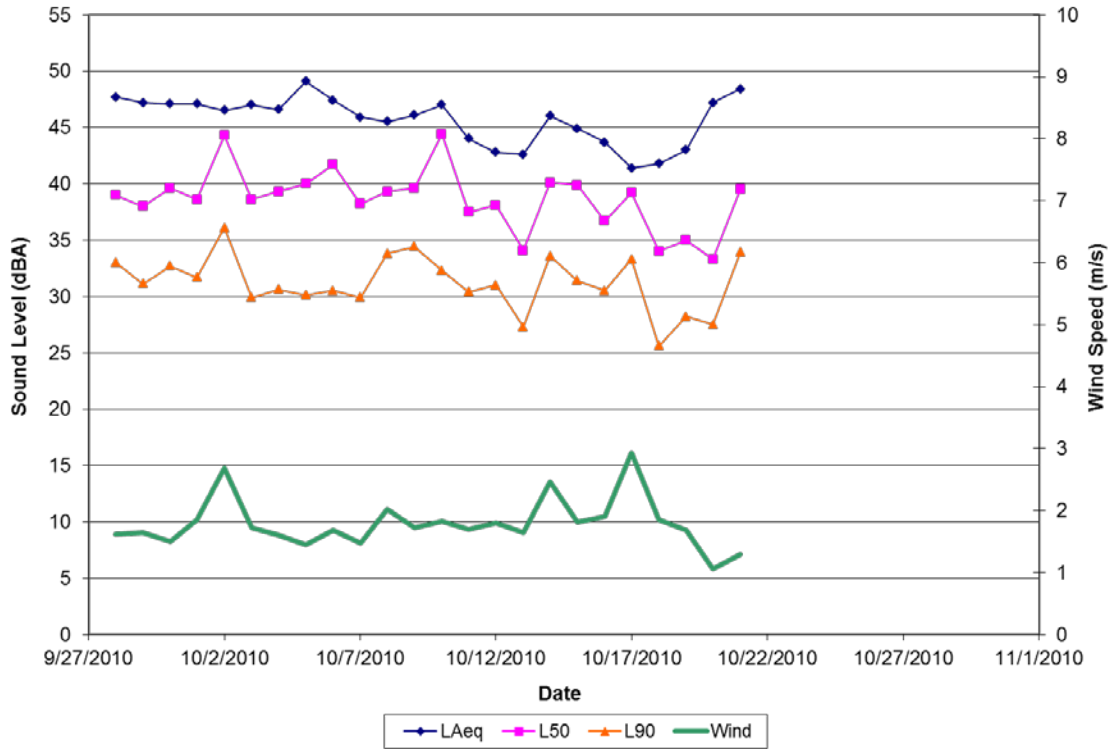


Figure 19. Daily sound levels and wind speeds for Site FODA002

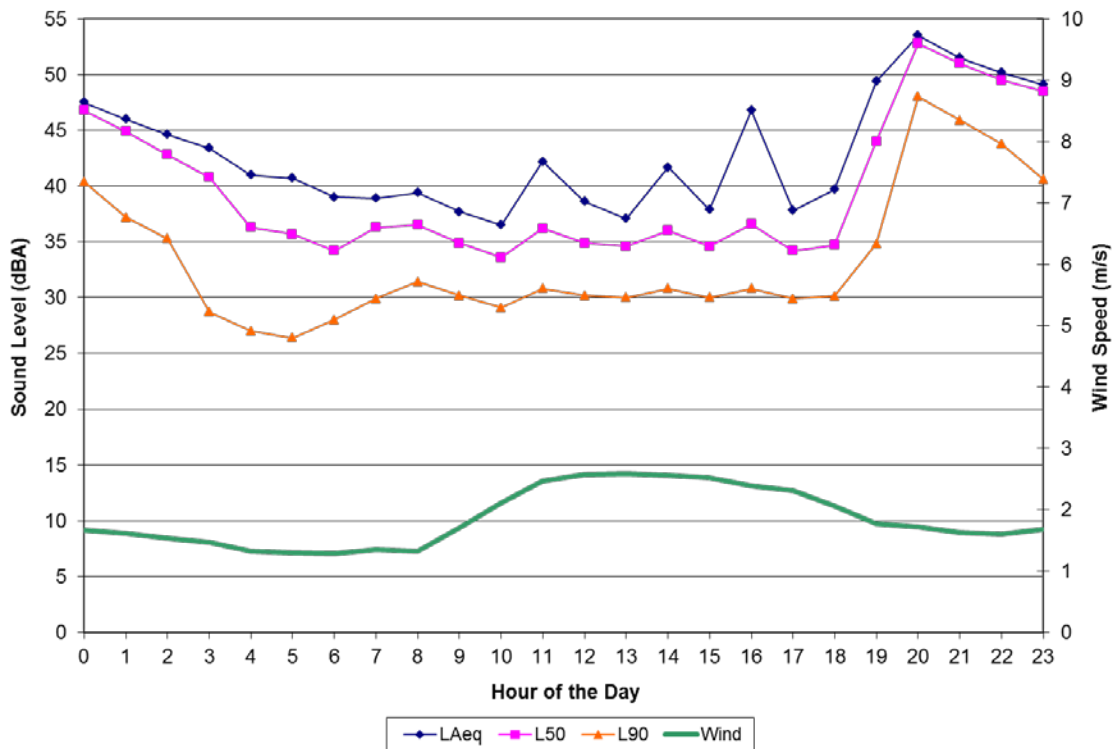


Figure 20. Hourly sound levels and wind speeds for Site FODA002

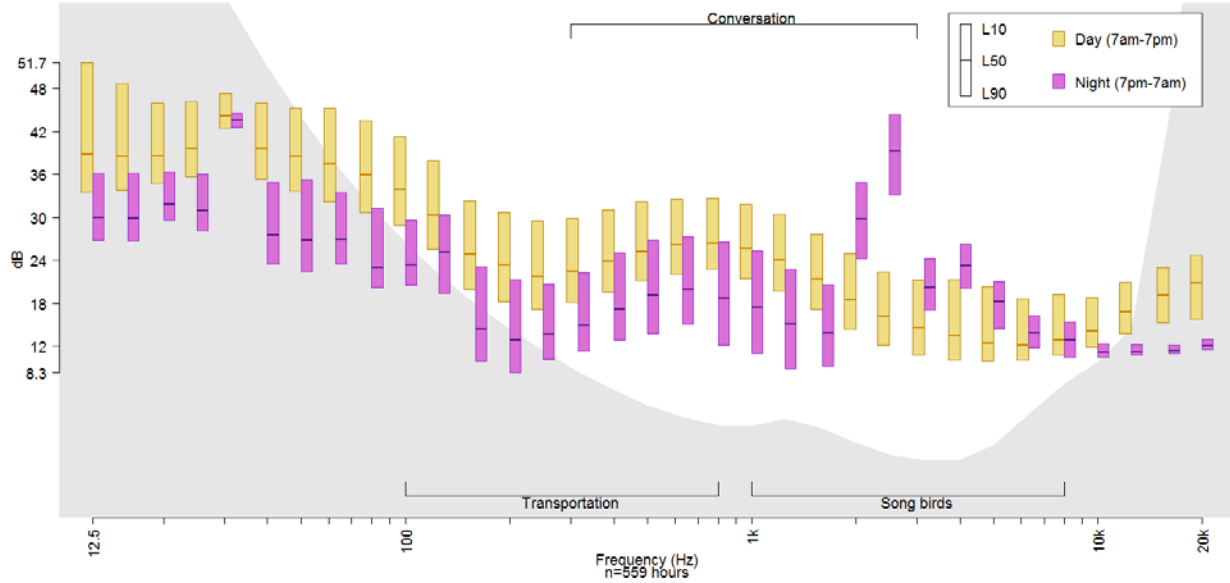


Figure 21. Sound spectrum for FODA002



Glossary of Acoustical Terms

Acoustical Environment

The actual physical sound resources, regardless of audibility, at a particular location.

Amplitude

The instantaneous magnitude of an oscillating quantity such as sound pressure. The peak amplitude is the maximum value.

Audibility

The ability of animals with normal hearing, including humans, to hear a given sound. Audibility is affected by the hearing ability of the animal, the masking effects of other sound sources, and by the frequency content and amplitude of the sound.

dB

A-weighted decibel. A-Weighted sum of sound energy across the range of human hearing. Humans do not hear well at very low or very high frequencies. Weighting adjusts for this.

Decibel

A logarithmic measure of acoustic or electrical signals. The formula for computing decibels is: $10 * (\text{Log}_{10}(\text{sound pressure/reference sound level}))$. 0 dB represents the lowest sound level that can be perceived by a human with healthy hearing. Conversational speech is about 65 dB.

Extrinsic Sound

Any sound not forming an essential part of the park unit, or a sound originating from outside the park boundary.

Frequency

The number of times per second that the sine wave of sound repeats itself. It can be expressed in cycles per second, or Hertz (Hz). Frequency equals Speed of Sound/ Wavelength.

Hearing Range (frequency)

By convention, an average, healthy, young person is said to hear frequencies from approximately 20Hz to 20000 Hz.

Hertz

A measure of frequency, or the number of pressure variations per second. A person with normal hearing can hear between 20 Hz and 20,000 Hz.

Human-Caused Sound

Any sound that is attributable to a human source.

Intrinsic sound

A sound which belongs to a park by its very nature, based on the park unit purposes, values, and establishing legislation. The term “intrinsic sounds” has replaced “natural sounds” in order to incorporate both cultural and historic sounds as part of the acoustic environment of a park.



L_{eq}

Energy Equivalent Sound Level. The level of a constant sound over a specific time period that has the same sound energy as the actual (unsteady) sound over the same period.

L_x

A metric used to describe acoustic data. It represents the level of sound exceeded x percent of the time during the given measurement period.

Masking

The process by which the threshold of audibility for a sound is raised by the presence of another sound.

Noise-Free Interval

The period of time between noise events (not silence).

Noise

Sound which is unwanted, either because of its effects on humans, its effect on fatigue or malfunction of physical equipment, or its interference with the perception or detection of other sounds (Source: McGraw Hill Dictionary of Scientific and Technical Terms).

Off-site Listening

The systematic identification of sound sources using digital recordings previously collected in the field.



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The Department of the Interior protects and manages the nation's natural resources and cultural heritage; provides scientific and other information about those resources; and honors its special responsibilities to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and affiliated Island Communities.

NPS 418/121358, June 2013

National Park Service
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Natural Resource Stewardship and Science

1201 Oakridge Drive, Suite 150
Fort Collins, CO 80525

www.nature.nps.gov