

## **Some Concerns of PDK WATCH in Atlanta, Georgia – Feb. 2006**

WHAT IS PDK WATCH? -- PDK Watch is a network of citizens in more than fifty civic associations, representing thousands of individuals in northeast Atlanta who are concerned about monitoring and controlling the development of DeKalb Peachtree (PDK) Airport.

PDK Airport is a general aviation CII airport, owned and operated by DeKalb County, situated in the midst of densely settled residential neighborhoods inside the I-285 perimeter of northeast Atlanta. PDK is currently the second busiest airport in the state of Georgia after Hartsfield-Jackson, in terms of annual flights.

Most of the residential neighborhoods around PDK Airport were developed before the significant expansion of PDK Airport began in the late 1980s when one runway at PDK was extended to 6,000 feet (ostensibly for "safety" reasons, rather than to allow larger aircraft to use PDK) (Doc. 1)

According to the Cost-Benefit study of PDK Airport completed in 1998 (Doc. 3) at least 80,000 residents in the area around PDK experienced significant negative impact from the Airport by the late 1990s.

PDK Watch's mission statement is the following: "The purpose of PDK Watch is to protect and assure the future of our established residential neighborhoods and quality of life in the areas affected by PDK Airport." (Docs. 3 & 5)

Special concerns of PDK Watch include: (1) seeking mitigation of PDK Airport related noise and environmental pollution, (2) protecting the property values and the quality of life of residents in the area; and (3) encouraging serious efforts to improve airport safety, security, and flight paths.

In particular, PDK Watch seeks to insure that the airport will not expand in ways that will allow increasing traffic by jets above the 66,000 lb. "maximum take-off weight" limit. That limit was established in 1987 when--in order to expand one runway to 6,000 feet without doing the federally mandated Environmental Impact Study--DeKalb County and PDK Airport made contractually binding assurances to the 11th Circuit Court of the United States, the FAA, and the public that 66,000 remain the maximum weight of aircraft allowed to use PDK Airport after the runway was extended. This limitation was repeatedly reaffirmed during the next decade (Doc. 2).

Since the late 1990s, however, under PDK Airport Director "Lee" Rimmel, PDK has increasingly disregarded the assurances it made to the 11th Circuit Court and the FAA, a process that is summarized in Doc. 1 and a series of other documents in this packet.

Note well that PDK Watch has NEVER advocated the closure of PDK Airport, an argument that some individuals have repeatedly and incorrectly asserted, apparently as part of a campaign of misinformation designed to try to discredit the legitimate environmental concerns of PDK Watch.

In fact, as noted in Doc. 5, PDK Watch actually drafted a proposed joint statement in 2003 at the request of and with the aid of the president of the PDK Airport pilot's association strongly reaffirming PDK Watch's commitment "to insuring that PDK remain STRICTLY a general aviation reliever airport that supports and sustains the infrastructure necessary to service and accommodate small light aircraft."

Although this proposed statement was regrettably never brought before the pilot's association itself for its consideration, the statement was overwhelmingly supported by PDK Watch members and shows the commitment of the organization.

Additional documents in this packet reflect the varied ways in which PDK Watch has attempted to control PDK expansion and mitigate its impact.

In 2002, for example, outraged citizens were able to get the DeKalb County Commission's support to kill a proposed Airport Overlay District that would have seriously undercut control over PDK Airport by elected officials and would have significantly threatened the property values of DeKalb property owners. (Doc. 4)

In June 2004, a number of citizen initiatives were presented at a meeting attended by 250 concerned individuals. Among the chief concerns were:

- (1) securing revised aviation flight paths that would mitigate noise pollution over residential areas (two individuals paid a total of \$10,000 to secure a professional study of such possible flight paths, but the study was ignored by the Airport);
- (2) initiating an Open Records Lawsuit in May 2004 (which was carried to successful completion in August 2005), requiring that PDK Airport release to the public the information that it collects electronically on the aircraft using PDK Airport (information that many other United States airports routinely release in real time on-line);
- (3) seeking to prevent PDK taxiway reconstruction to a level that would allow aircraft larger than 66,000/75,000 lbs. to use PDK routinely and possibly allow the airport to become a CIII airport eventually;
- (4) seeking to get the County-owned green space outside the Airport's fenced perimeter preserved as permanent green space for the benefit of DeKalb County citizens and to maintain a noise buffer for adjacent communities; and

(5) raising the question of whether an increase in proposed international traffic at PDK Airport might adversely impact surrounding neighborhoods. (**Doc. 6**)

**Doc. 7** includes important information on the PDK (Feltus) Open Records Lawsuit, which was carried to success after 18 months of litigation in August 2005. The evidence obtained as a result of the release of the flight records clearly establishes the repeated violations alleged in the suit. The larger issues raised by the suit continue to be contested and may well eventually culminate in a national suit relating to environmental quality and the responsibility of government to enforce its own contractual and environmental laws.

**Doc. 8** includes important information on the often-acrimonious debate about the policies to guide the development of the PDK Airport Master Plan, including the efforts to exclude significant citizen participation by the PDK Airport Advisory Board, the citizen response, and the final PDK policies approved by the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners in October 2005.

**Doc. 9** gives our latest electronic PDK Watch HEADLINES which are transmitted electronically to thousands of concerned citizens. For further information on this or any related issues, consult: [www.pdkwatch.org](http://www.pdkwatch.org) and [www.opendekalbinc.org](http://www.opendekalbinc.org)

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