



Wild Lands Advocate 11(4): 15, August 2003

Heli-Tour Company Wants Unlimited Flights Over Wilderness

By Tamaini Snaith, AWA Conservation Biologist

Icefield Helicopters have applied to have the only remaining restriction removed from their operating permit. If they are successful, there will be nothing to restrict the number of flights they operate over national parks and other sensitive wilderness. AWA and other local tourism operators want more restrictions on heli-operations, not less.

Icefield Helicopters has been operating heli-touring, hiking and fishing trips over the national parks, the Bighorn Wildland and surrounding wilderness since 1999.

Other restrictions attached to their operation permit have already been removed. In 2001, despite local opposition, Icefield was granted their request to expand their operating hours. They are now free to fly from 7:00 am to 8:30 pm.

The only remaining restriction on their operation restricts their operation to three helicopters. But Icefield wants to be able to use an unlimited number of helicopters for an unlimited number of flights per day.

Helicopters create noise pollution that can disturb, stress and displace wildlife populations, particularly during sensitive seasons and at certain times of day. Restrictions on their use are important to avoid creating these disturbances. Unrestricted helicopter operations can pose a serious threat to sensitive wildlife species in the area.

Noisy helicopters that disrupt the solitude of the wilderness experience also affect backcountry users. A local survey found that users of this area overwhelmingly felt that helicopter tourism was not an appropriate development option for the area.

For more information see our June Action Alert on our website.

