
To: TCAA Board

From: Ross Statham, Secretary

Re: **Bird Strike Issue; Removal of Rookery**

Date: May 5, 2022

1. Skydive Panama City has reported two bird strikes and has formally asked us to work to resolve the issue of excessive birds on airport property. Our Chairman and I have confirmed the issue.
2. On Monday, May 2nd I spoke with a staff biologist from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. She provided some basic information that the species we are primarily dealing with, called cattle egrets, are a federally protected species.
3. In reaching out to Chastity Clark of the FAA, she immediately referred me to Amy Reed of the FAA; on May 3 we had a video call with myself, Ms. Reed, Ms. Clark and Stephen Wilson to discuss the issue.
4. Amy Reed was very helpful. In pointing to our Wildlife Management Study and Plan, she noted that several species have built a rookery just north of our terminal within the wet woodlands, adjacent to both Skydive Panama City and the Baptist College hangars. The species are cattle egrets, snowy egrets, white ibis and little blue herons. All are federally protected.
5. She reported that now is currently nesting season, and the rookery most likely at its highest activity levels for the year.
6. She reported that special regulation 68A-9012 allows us to take wildlife that are a safety hazard. She noted that we should apply for a US Fish and Wildlife Service Migratory Bird Depredation Permit; this will allow us, within the guidelines of the permit, to remove habitat or take (destroy) hazardous wildlife. (We have completed this permit, which our Chairman has signed, but have not yet submitted it.)
7. She discussed a process called egg oiling, which uses cooking spray (available from any grocery store), and spaying cooking oil on the eggs. It will smother the embryo, but the parents will continue to sit on the nest. She reported that while it's highly labor intensive, it's also highly effective and does not require a permit, but that it takes two or three seasons for it to cause nesting birds to leave permanently. I do not recommend we take this step due to time constraints.
8. I reported to Amy, Chastity and Stephen that we have identified probable budget for the removal of the trees that contain the rookery; Amy stated that provided those trees are knocked over, rather than removed, our permitting process will be considerably easier, although we will still need to obtain permits from the water management district.
9. I subsequently reached out to Michelle Outlaw with the US Fish and Wildlife Service in Atlanta about the permit and asked for a time to discuss. She forwarded my email to Mariah Letowt, whom she reported "handles all airport depredation permits". I anticipate receiving a response back within the next few days.
10. I believe that our best course of action is to discuss with US FWS, supply a permit application to them in which we ask to remove the rookery, nests and eggs, but not take (kill or trap) any birds.
11. In discussing with Lee at AVCON this morning (May 5th), we have received permission from FDOT to include the removal of the rookery trees as a part of our upcoming tree removal project, **and he is working to expedite this and the larger project.**

