



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the
Interior

Mount Rainier
National Park

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Mount Rainier News Release

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Mount Rainier National Park Seeks Public Comment on Draft Alternatives to be studied for the Air Tour Management Plan Environmental Assessment

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), in cooperation with the National Park Service (NPS), is in the process of developing an Air Tour Management Plan (ATMP) and associated Environmental Assessment (EA) for Mount Rainier National Park (Mount Rainier), pursuant to the *National Parks Air Tour Management Act of 2000 (NPATMA)*.

Five air tour operators have authorization to provide commercial air tours over and within ½ mile of Mount Rainier. Most of these operators originate from the Puget Sound area, and one originates from Wenatchee. Since January of 2003, these five operators have had authority to conduct a maximum combined total of 114 air tours per year, though in recent years, operations have likely been below this level. While the air tour visitor experience varies depending on weather conditions and the desires of the air tour client, the primary attraction for air tour visitors is viewing the summit of Mount Rainier.

An ATMP EA is being developed to provide measures to mitigate or prevent significant adverse impacts, if any, of commercial air tour operations at Mount Rainier, including impacts on natural and cultural resources, visitor experiences, and tribal lands. The *NPATMA* applies to any person who conducts a commercial air tour operation over a unit of the national park system, over tribal lands that are within or abutting a unit of the national park system, or over any area within ½ mile outside a unit of the national park system. A commercial air tour operation is defined as a flight conducted for compensation or hire in a powered aircraft where the purpose of the flight is sightseeing, during which the aircraft flies below an altitude of 5,000 feet above ground level (AGL). The ATMP has no authorization over non-air-tour aircraft, such as military or general aviation aircraft, so it will not address these operations.

In April and May 2010, the FAA and NPS solicited public input during the public scoping period for the ATMP EA. Based on input received during the scoping period, in combination with knowledge of staff at Mount Rainier, the FAA and NPS have developed four draft alternatives that may be evaluated in the ATMP EA.

The FAA and NPS are now making a second request for public input on the Mount Rainier ATMP. The agencies are inviting the public, agencies, tribes, and other interested parties to provide comments, suggestions, and input regarding the routes and parameters (e.g. time of day and days of the week when flights could be allowed) of the preliminary alternatives under consideration for study in the Mount Rainier ATMP EA. During the

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comment period, three public meetings will provide opportunities for members of the public to learn more about the draft alternatives under consideration and to provide comments to the FAA and NPS. An ATMP EA Draft Alternatives Packet that describes the project and the draft alternatives in greater detail is available at:

- http://parkplanning.nps.gov/MORA_ATMP
- http://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/arc/programs/air_tour_management_plan/park_specific_plans/mountrainier.cfm
- Mount Rainier National Park Tahoma Woods Administrative Office
- Bonney Lake Library
- Buckley Library
- Eatonville Library
- Enumclaw City Library
- Graham Library
- Orting Library
- Packwood Timberland Library
- Parkland-Spanaway Library
- Puyallup Library
- Seattle Central Library
- South Hill Library
- Summit Library (Tacoma)
- Sumner Library
- Tacoma Public Library – Main Library
- Yakima Valley Regional Library
- Environmental Ctr. Resource Library, Huxley College of Environmental Studies, Western Washington University

PUBLIC MEETINGS:

- April 26, 2011, 6:30-8:30pm: Mountaineers Building, Goodman Auditorium
7700 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115
- April 27, 2011, 6:30-8:30pm: Mount Rainier National Park Education Center
Tahoma Woods, Ashford Headquarters
55210 238th Ave E., Ashford, WA 98304
- April 28, 2011, 6:30-8:30pm: Washington State History Museum, 2nd Floor,
Activity Room, 1911 Pacific Ave, Tacoma, WA 98402

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Comment Period: Please submit any written response you may have no later than May 16, 2011.

SUBMITTING COMMENTS:

Written comments on the draft alternatives to be studied in the ATMP EA can be submitted via one of the following methods:

- At any of the public meetings
- Electronically via the electronic public comment form on the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment System at:
http://parkplanning.nps.gov/MORA_ATMP
- By mail: Larry Tonish, FAA, P.O. Box 92007, Los Angeles, California 90009-2007

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