



Frequently Asked Questions

Question: How would the daily cap work in the NPS Preferred Alternative?

Answer:

- The NPS Preferred Alternative includes a daily cap of 364 commercial tour operations (fixed-wings and helicopters). The maximum peak day actually flown during 2004-2006 was 314, so the reported data indicates that there should not be any reduction in air tours under the proposed daily cap. In fact, that the daily cap would allow for some flexibility and growth in air tours even on the busiest days.
- The daily cap would apply to the total of all commercial air-tour operations, not to individual air-tour operators, nor to non-air-tour operations (i.e., transportation, maintenance, training, and repositioning flights). Daily caps would also not apply to exempt operations.
- There is also a requirement for reporting daily operations by each air-tour operator. Reporting would be the primary means of monitoring compliance with the daily cap and annual allocations, but additional monitoring may occur.
- There would also be a communication-based adaptive management approach to review reporting and monitoring data and address any problems encountered in implementing the plan, including if the daily cap was found to have been exceeded. It is intended that air-tour operators would coordinate flights to avoid exceeding the daily cap as part of this adaptive management process.
- Procedures would be developed as part of the adaptive management approach to address any weather issues that may shut down one or more flight routes creating daily cap issues.

Question: How would allocations work in the NPS Preferred Alternative?

Answer:

- The NPS Preferred Alternative includes an annual allocation of 65,000 air-tour and related operations. This total is based on the maximum number of actual operations reported by air-tour operators during 2004-2008, which was about 57,000 air-tour operations actually reported and allocations actually used.
- Most non-air-tour operations would be moved outside the Special Flight Rules Area.
- Annual allocations would be provided to each operator similar to today, except totals for each operator would be adjusted based on the allocation limit. Each non-exempt operation in the SFRA would require use of an allocation. Current exemptions would remain in place.

Question: How would Quiet Technology (QT) conversion work in the NPS Preferred Alternative?

Answer:

- Full conversion to QT aircraft required in 10 years.
- Phased-in QT-only routes across North Rim for fixed-wings and helicopters would be open all year. A north-bound route in Marble Canyon would be available for QT-only fixed wing aircraft (no phase-in).
- Use of an allocation would not be needed for QT operations Jan. 1-Mar. 31 (subject to monitoring to ensure that noise provisions of law are met).

Examples of current QT aircraft

Fixed Wing	Helicopter
Piper PA-18-150	ECO-Star 130
Vistaliner (DHC - 6QP)	Bell 407 (with Quiet Cruise Kit)
Dornier 228	Whisper Jet S-55QT
Cessna 208	McDonnell-Douglas 900
Cessna 425	
Cessna TR 182	

Question: What are QT aircraft?

Answer:

- QT aircraft for Grand Canyon are defined by FAA, generally based on measured flyover noise levels of an aircraft and its seating configuration.
- Examples of current QT aircraft are listed in the table.

Question: What changes would occur to General Aviation Corridors in the NPS Preferred Alternative?

Answer:

- Very little. The four current general aviation flight corridors would remain with minimum flight altitudes of 10,500 feet same as current. The Fossil Canyon Corridor would be pivoted slightly to the southeast in response to a request from the Havasupai Tribe, and the Dragon Corridor would change slightly to include a dogleg.

Question: What changes would occur to the Flight-free Zones in the NPS Preferred Alternative?

Answer:

- The ceiling would be raised to 17,999 feet MSL for all Flight-free Zones. Boundaries would be modified slightly to accommodate the Dragon Corridor dogleg. No flights would be allowed below 18,000 feet MSL except for 1) aircraft in transition on Victor airways V210, V257, and V293 at or above 14,500 feet, 2) aircraft under the positive control of an air-traffic control center or tower when necessary for safety, 3) administrative use under an appropriate written waiver approved by both the FAA and the manager(s) of the over-flown land(s).

Question: What are Peak and Off-Peak seasons?

Answer:

- Because Alternatives E, F and the NPS Preferred Alternative propose seasonal route shifts, they are analyzed for different Peak and Off-Peak Seasons. Alternative A (No Action/Current Condition) does not contain, and is not analyzed for, Peak and Off-Peak Seasons. In the Draft EIS, Peak and Off-Peak Season analysis is based on the day of the greatest actual number of flights reported in 2005 within the dates of each season shown in the table.

Peak and Off-Peak Season by Alternative

Alternative	Peak Season	Off-Peak Season
E	July 1 – September 15	September 16 – June 30
F	February 1 – November 30	December 1 – January 31
NPS Preferred	May 1 – October 31	November 1 – April 30



Frequently Asked Questions

Question: What were the objectives that NPS considered when developing the Draft EIS?

Answer:

- Improve and maintain Substantial Restoration of Natural Quiet and enhance Grand Canyon National Park visitor experience
- Provide a reasonable opportunity for visitors to safely experience Grand Canyon by air tour, without adversely affecting the national airspace system
- Protect public health from adverse effects associated with aircraft Overflights
- Protect wilderness character in Wilderness in the Special Flight Rules Area
- Provide primitive recreation opportunities without aircraft intrusions in most backcountry areas, most Colorado River locations, and destination points accessed by both backcountry and river visitors
- Provide recreational opportunities with limited aircraft intrusions for visitors at developed areas along the rim and major front-county destination points accessible by road
- Protect sensitive wildlife habitat and cultural resources
- Provide a quality aerial viewing experience while protecting park resources and minimizing conflicts with other park visitors
- Maintain an economically viable and safe air-tour industry

Question: Why change the current condition?

Answer:

- As directed in the 1987 National Parks Overflights Act, the NPS is developing a plan for substantial restoration of natural quiet and experience of the park, and for the protection of public health and safety from adverse effects associated with aircraft overflights. The NPS is concerned that sensitive natural and cultural resources and ground-based visitors in some areas of the park continue to be adversely affected by aircraft overflights. Therefore, the NPS has determined that additional action is needed to achieve substantial restoration of natural quiet at more than minimum levels, improve visitor experience, and ensure that restoration of natural quiet is maintained over time.

Question: Why not ban all air tours? How can any air-tour impacts be acceptable? Why should anyone be allowed to fly over the park at all?

Answer:

- Air tours can provide a unique visitor experience at Grand Canyon National Park. However, like all visitor experiences, air tours are only appropriate in some places at some times and at amounts consistent with protecting park resources and minimizing conflicts with other types of visitor experiences. The goal is to ensure air tours are managed in a manner that protects park resources and ensures that substantial restoration of natural quiet is achieved and maintained in the park.

Question: What role does each agency have in the development of the Draft EIS?

Answer:

- In 2006, the NPS and FAA published a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS for the substantial restoration of natural quiet. The 1987 National Parks Overflights Act directed the NPS to develop recommendations for actions to provide for the “substantial restoration of natural quiet.” The Act further directed the FAA to implement the NPS recommendations “without change,” barring safety concerns. Therefore, the development of a Draft EIS is under the purview of the NPS, including impact analysis. FAA will be the lead agency for rule-making to implement the NPS recommendations.

Question: What is the Grand Canyon Working Group (GCWG)?

Answer:

- Federal Register Notice of May 31, 2005 solicited membership in the GCWG under authority of the National Parks Overflights Advisory Group (NPOAG) Aviation Rulemaking Committee. The role of the GCWG (within the NPOAG) was to provide advice and recommendations regarding the implementation of the National Parks Overflights Act of 1987 with respect to the Grand Canyon. GCWG was comprised of a representative and balanced group of agency, tribal, environmental, aviation and other interests.

Question: How would this planning effort affect commercial aviation?

Answer:

- This plan will not affect commercial aviation above 17,999 feet MSL. The FAA has stated that in the future they will consider air space redesign, improvements in navigational capabilities and the use of advanced technology for aircraft to reduce noise over Grand Canyon National Park from commercial aircraft above 17,999 feet MSL.

Question: What is the definition of “Substantial Restoration of Natural Quiet?”

Answer:

- Substantial restoration of natural quiet has been defined by NPS as the achievement of natural quiet (i.e., no aircraft audible) in 50% or more of the park for 75-100% of the day, each and every day. 50% is a minimum in the restoration goal.

Question: Why has the goal of 50% or more not been met based on current conditions for Substantial Restoration of Natural Quiet?

Answer:

- In the 1995 Report to Congress, the NPS recommendation indicated that “50% or more” could be as high as 80%. The NPS definition, which was clarified in a September 24, 2008 Federal Register notice, is purposeful in stating “or more” to ensure that park resources and visitor experience are protected at more than a minimum level. It has always been the position of the NPS that 50% restoration is not the goal, it is minimum restoration.

Question: How would tribes be affected by the NPS Preferred Alternative and Draft EIS?

Answer:

- Grand Canyon National Park consults with all 11 affiliated American Indian tribes. There are four tribes that were part of the GCWG and actively participated in the development of the plan.
- Hualapai Indian Tribe: would remain similar to current conditions and continue to be exempt from allocations and caps. SFRA boundary and routes would be adjusted to address concerns expressed by the tribe.
- Navajo Nation: the NPS Preferred Alternative is the only Alternative expected to provide a socioeconomic benefit to the tribe by providing entrance and exit to/from Navajo lands to/from SFRA tour routes. Operations that land on Navajo lands and also fly on SFRA routes would not be exempt from allocations and the daily cap. They would be permitted to deviate from the SFRA routes by a 7711 waiver. The waiver would only allow deviations at locations agreed to by NPS and Navajo Nation through the EIS process.
- Havasupai Indian Tribe: the Fossil Canyon General Aviation Corridor would be changed slightly to move it away from Supai Village. The Brown 6 helicopter route between Tusayan and Supai Village would be shifted as requested by the tribe.
- Hopi Indian Tribe: the plan reflects concerns regarding sacred sites, including moving routes west of the Little Colorado River confluence.

Grand Canyon National Park

Special Flight Rules Area in the Vicinity of Grand Canyon National Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Documents Associated with Draft EIS DES 10-60, Special Flight Rules Area in the Vicinity of Grand Canyon National Park

Date	Document
January 1975	Grand Canyon National Park Enlargement Act (PL 93-620; 16 USC Chapter 1, 228g) If significant adverse effects of overflights on park natural quiet and experience, then action required http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/usc.cgi?ACTION=RETRIEVE&FILE=\$\$xa\$\$busc16.wais&start=1276764&SIZE=2570&TYPE=PDF
August 1987	National Parks Overflights Act (PL 100-91; 16 USC §1a-1note) Noise associated with overflights is causing a significant adverse effect on natural quiet and experience of the park, and raising safety concerns. Required <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analysis of nature, scope, and effects of overflights in national park units • recommendations to substantially restore natural quiet and experience in park, designate Flight-free Zones, no flights below rim except for administrative and emergency operations http://www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/upload/PL100-91.pdf
June 1988	SFAR 50-2 (53 FR 20264) Revised flight procedures in Grand Canyon National Park (GCNP) airspace <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extended the Special Flight Rules Area (SFRA) • prohibited flights below 14,500 feet mean sea level (MSL) • established four Flight-free Zones • set special routes for commercial sightseeing operators • required certain terrain avoidance and communications requirements http://rgl.faa.gov/Regulatory_and_Guidance_Library%5CrgFAR.nsf/0/DD9C9F385188169E86256C7800586329?OpenDocument
March 1994	Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (94-6216) Sought public comment on general policy and specific recommendations for voluntary and regulatory actions to address the effects of aircraft overflights on national parks http://www.federalregister.gov/articles/1994/03/17/94-6216/overflights-of-units-of-the-national-park-system-proposed-rule-department-of-transportation
July 1995	Report to Congress on Effects of Aircraft Overflights on the National Park System Defined restoration of natural quiet as 50% or more of the park achieves natural quiet (no aircraft audible) 75 to 100% of the day http://www.nonoise.org/library/npreport/intro.htm#TABLE%20OF%20CONTENTS
April 1996	Presidential Memorandum (61 FR 18229) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretary of Transportation directed to issue proposed regulations for GCNP to appropriately limit sightseeing aircraft to reduce aircraft noise immediately, and further restore natural quiet, as defined by the Secretary of the Interior, while maintaining aviation safety in accordance with the Overflights Act • required development of plan to complete restoration and maintenance of natural quiet if the Final Rule did not accomplish the goal http://www.federalregister.gov/articles/1996/04/25/96-10369/additional-transportation-planning-to-address-impacts-of-transportation-on-national-parks
December 1996	Final Rule Special Flight Rules in the Vicinity of GCNP (61 FR 69302) Established <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seasonal flight curfews for GCNP East End (14 CFR § 93.305) • temporary cap on number of air-tour flights • air-tour operator reporting requirement • changed airspace routes and altitudes for air-tour flights (14 CFR §93.307) http://www.federalregister.gov/articles/1996/12/31/96-33146/special-flight-rules-in-the-vicinity-of-grand-canyon-national-park
December 1996	Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (61 FR 69334) Noise Limitations for Aircraft Operations in the Vicinity of GCNP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduced air-tour aircraft impact by providing an incentive flight corridor through GCNP for noise-efficient (quiet) aircraft • categorized aircraft by noise efficiency • removed aircraft cap for the most noise-efficient aircraft http://www.federalregister.gov/articles/1996/12/31/96-33145/noise-limitations-for-aircraft-operations-in-the-vicinity-of-grand-canyon-national-park
February 1997	Final Rule (62 FR 8862) Delayed effective date for majority of provisions in the December 1996 Final Rule http://www.federalregister.gov/articles/1997/02/26/97-4824/special-flight-rules-in-the-vicinity-of-grand-canyon-national-park
May 1997	Notice of Availability (62 FR 26909) Announced availability of mapped commercial air-tour routes as announced in December 1996 Final Rule http://www.federalregister.gov/articles/1997/05/15/97-12746/air-tour-routes-for-the-grand-canyon-national-park

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October 1997	<p>Notice of Clarification and Reevaluation of Final Environmental Assessment (EA) (62 FR 58898) regarding December 1996 Special Flight Rules in the Vicinity of GCNP Final Rule aircraft cap. The EA accompanying the Rule used incorrect number of 136 aircraft in the analysis (should have been 260)</p> <p>http://www.federalregister.gov/articles/1997/10/31/97-28856/special-flight-rules-in-the-vicinity-of-grand-canyon-national-park</p>
January 1999	<p>Notice of Agency Policy Change (64 FR 3969) Noise Evaluation Methodology for Air Tour Operations over GCNP</p> <p>Described a two-zone system with different noise thresholds (audibility and noticeability) to model substantial restoration achieved. Natural ambient sound zones refined and added to additional zones</p> <p>http://www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/airoverflights_documents.htm</p>
July 1999	<p>Notice of Proposed Rule Making (Notice 99-11)</p> <p>Modified GCNP SFRA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extended SFRA's eastern portion and Desert View Flight-free Zone to the boundary 5 nautical miles east • modified Bright Angel Flight-free Zone to a possible quiet-technology incentive route • provided for an additional route between Las Vegas and Tusayan • modified Sanup Flight-free Zone's northern boundary <p>http://www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/airoverflights_documents.htm</p>
July 1999	<p>Notice of Proposed Rule Making (Notice 99-12)</p> <p>Limited number of commercial air tours in the SFRA by proposing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • temporary limits (allocations) on number of SFRA air tours to number reported 5/1/97 to 4/30/98 • new definitions for commercial SFRA operations (transportation, training, maintenance, repositioning, and flights serving Grand Canyon West) • no transfer of allocations into either Dragon or Zuni Point Corridors; transfer of allocations out of these corridors is permissible • no transfer of allocations from peak to off-peak season <p>http://www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/airoverflights_documents.htm</p>
July 1999	<p>Notice of Proposed Rule Making (64 FR 37296-37301) Modification of the Dimensions of the Grand Canyon National Park Special Flight Rules Area and Flight Free Zones. Changes included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • elimination of Blue-1 and Blue-1A routes through National Canyon and Havasupai Reservation • simplifying and shortening West End routes (Green-4 and Blue-2) • establishing Blue Direct North and Blue Direct South routes between Las Vegas and Tusayan • extending Green-3 and Black-4 routes around Bright Angel and Desert View Flight-free Zones <p>http://www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/airoverflights_documents.htm</p>
April 2000	<p>Final Rule (65 FR 17736-17743) Modification of the Dimensions of the Grand Canyon National Park Special Flight Rules Area and Flight Free Zones</p> <p>http://www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/airoverflights_documents.htm</p>
April 2000	<p>Final Rule (65 FR 17708) Commercial Air Tour Limitation in the Grand Canyon National Park Special Flight Rules Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changed air-tour airspace and routes • set limitations on number of GCNP air-tour flights (allocations) at 90,000 • added air-tour operator reporting requirements <p>http://www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/airoverflights_documents.htm</p>
April 2000	<p>National Parks Air Tour Management Act (P.L. 106-181)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • required "quiet aircraft technology" definition and creation of incentive routes for quiet aircraft, as long as routes do not negatively impact substantial restoration of natural quiet, Native American lands, or safety. • mandated development of Air Tour Management Plans (ATMP) • prohibited commercial air-tour operators from conducting tours over a national park or tribal lands, except in accordance with the Act, conditions prescribed for the operator by the FAA administrator, and any air-tour management plan for the park or tribal lands • required a cooperative relationship between FAA and NPS regarding air-tour management planning <p>http://www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/airoverflights_documents.htm</p>
December 2001	<p>Final Rule (66 FR 63294-63296)</p> <p>Extended implementation of East End Airspace Modification Final Rule until February 2003</p> <p>http://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2001/12/05/01-30012/modifications-of-the-dimensions-of-the-grand-canyon-national-park-special-flight-rules-area-and#p-3</p>
January 2003	<p>Aircraft Noise Model Validation Study</p> <p>http://www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/airoverflights_documents.htm</p>
November 2003	<p>Federal Register Notices (68 FR 63129-63132)</p> <p>Defined "the day" and selection of NMSIM as NPS "model of choice" to determine restoration of natural quiet at GCNP</p> <p>http://www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/airoverflights_documents.htm</p>

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March 2005	Assessment of Tools for Modeling Aircraft Noise in National Parks Designated Integrated Noise Model (INM) 6.2 as the model for assessing aircraft noise at GCNP and parks requiring Air Tour Management Plans http://www.fican.org/pdf/Assessment_ToolsModeling_NPS.pdf
March 2005	Final Rule (70 FR 16084) Noise Limitations for Aircraft Operations in the Vicinity of Grand Canyon National Park Rule <ul style="list-style-type: none">• set decibel levels for quiet-technology aircraft• classified tour aircraft by noise produced• identified which aircraft meet or do not meet GCNP quiet-aircraft technology designation http://www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/airoverflights_documents.htm
March 2005	Notice (70 FR 30992) Membership in the Grand Canyon Working Group of the National Parks Overflights Advisory Group Aviation Rulemaking Committee. NPS and FAA establish a Grand Canyon Working Group within NPOAG, and ask people to assist/nominate representatives to the ADR working group, and identify NPOAG role in ADR process and conflict-resolution efforts http://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2005/05/31/05-10684/membership-in-the-grand-canyon-working-group-of-the-national-parks-overflights-advisory-group
January 2006	Notice of Intent (71 FR 4192) to Prepare Environmental Impact Statement http://www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/airoverflights_documents.htm
February 2006	Final Rule (71 FR 09439) Delayed implementation of East End airspace and commercial air-tour route changes http://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2006/02/24/06-1759/delayed-implementation-of-the-airspace-modification-final-rule-for-the-grand-canyon-national-park
April 2008	Notice (73 FR 19246-19248) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• clarified definition of substantial restoration of natural quiet at Grand Canyon National Park (will be achieved when reduction of noise from aircraft operations below 18,000 feet MSL results in 50% or more of the park achieving restoration of natural quiet, i.e., no aircraft audible for 75 to 100% of the day, each and every day)• 50% restoration defined as the minimum goal http://www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/airoverflights_documents.htm
February 2010	Draft EIS Special Flight Rules Area in the Vicinity of Grand Canyon National Park http://parkplanning.nps.gov/grca



Grand Canyon National Park

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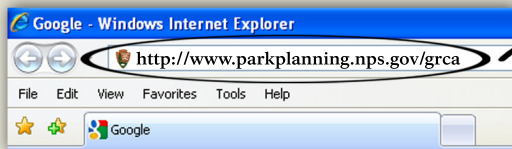
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Submitting a comment online at the National Park Service Web site

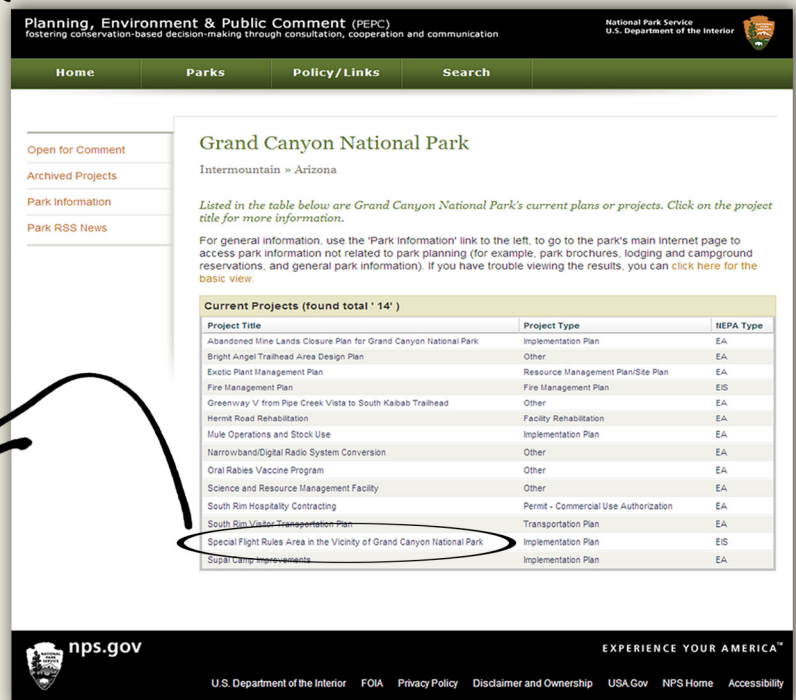
Step 1

Visit the Planning, Environment and Public
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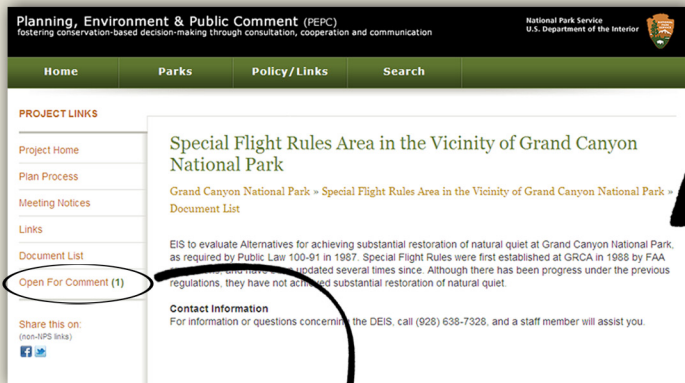
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Step 3

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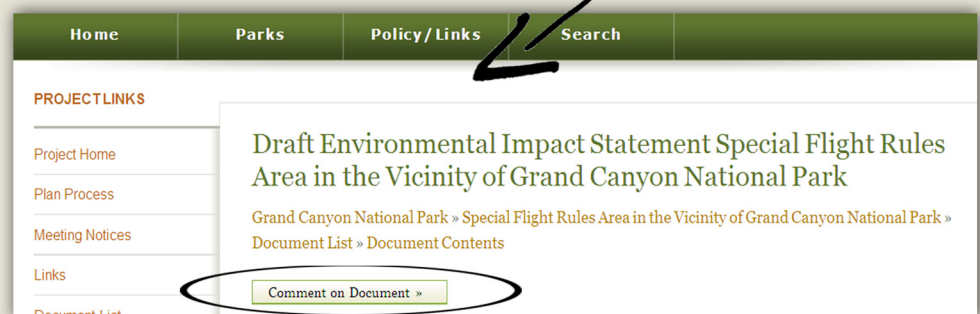
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Click on the "Draft Environmental
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Step 5

Click on the "Comment on Document"
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Draft Environmental Impact Statement Special Flight Rules Area in the Vicinity of Grand Canyon National Park

We welcome your comments on this project.

The comment period closes on '06/20/2011 at 11:59 PM.'

Your comments must be submitted or postmarked by midnight Mountain Time on '06/20/2011 by 11:59 PM.'

Before including your address, telephone number, electronic mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comments, you should be aware that your entire comment (including your personal identifying information) may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us to withhold your personal identifying information from public review by checking the box "**keep my contact information private**," we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

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Please submit your comments in the box provided. You can enter up to 35,000 characters in the comment field (approximately equivalent to a 10 page letter). If you wish to send us more detailed comments, you may submit them in hardcopy by clicking on Print Form in the left navigation.

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Submitting Effective Comments

Suggestions for Effective Comments

The NPS is accepting comments regarding the Draft EIS throughout the 120-day comment period, which ends June 20, 2011. Comments should be substantive, meaning they raise, question, or debate a point of fact or policy. While each and every comment will be accepted, suggestions for making comments more effective include...

Share Your Opinions with Rationale

To be most effective, comments should address specific areas of the Draft EIS (i.e., Alternatives, impact analysis, affected environment), and provide rationale or the “why” behind the comment. This rationale will greatly help the project team evaluate issues addressed in your comment and respond to your comment in the Final EIS. All comments will be recorded and evaluated, but substantive comments will receive a response in the Final EIS. The NPS response may result in changes to the NPS Preferred Alternative or other areas of the Draft EIS.

Example Substantive Comment (with Rationale):

_____ is a good/bad idea because _____
_____ should be changed because _____

Submitting Comments

Comments and questions can be submitted

- ▶ in writing on Comment Cards at this Open House
- ▶ orally to a facilitator to be written on a flipchart at this Open House
- ▶ to the stenographer at this Open House
- ▶ electronically at www.parkplanning.nps.gov/grca

Personal Information Disclaimer:

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