

National Parks Air Tour Management Program



**Federal Aviation
Administration**



**National Park
Service**

**WELCOME – WE WILL
BEGIN SHORTLY**

September 27, 2021



Photo Credit: National Park Service (NPS)

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**Draft Air Tour
Management Plan for:**

**Bryce Canyon
National Park**

September 27, 2021



Photo Credit: National Park Service (NPS)

Welcome

- Thank you for joining us today.
- Today's meeting focuses on the draft Air Tour Management Plan for Bryce Canyon National Park.
- We invite you to share your feedback on this draft.
- Specific instructions will be provided throughout this meeting on how to submit your questions.
- This meeting is held pursuant to the National Parks Air Tour Management Act (NPATMA) and its implementing regulations.



Presenters

- **Keith Lusk**, Program Manager, Special Programs Staff, Western-Pacific Region, FAA
- **Vicki Ward**, Overflights Program Manager, Natural Sounds and Night Skies Division, NPS
- **Jim Ireland**, Superintendent, Bryce Canyon National Park



Asking Questions

- Throughout the meeting, we invite you to share your questions. Please submit questions using the Google form posted by the FAA in the chat area of the social media platform you are using (Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube).
- Questions will be addressed at the end of the presentations as part of the Q&A portion.



Submitting Comments

- All written comments for the record must be submitted via the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) site or sent to the mailing addresses listed on the Bryce Canyon National Park PEPC site.
- These written comments become part of the official record.
- Please note that written comments must be submitted on or before October 3, 2021.



Format of Meeting

- This meeting will be 90 minutes long.
- We will adjourn at 4:00 PM Mountain Time.
- In the event questions are addressed before this end time, we will continue to hold the meeting until this identified end time to allow for any additional questions that might come in.



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**Overview of the National
Parks Air Tour
Management Act
(NPATMA) and Air Tour
Management Plans (ATMP)**

September 27, 2021



Photo Credit: National Park Service (NPS)

NPATMA Overview

- Requires the FAA, in cooperation with the NPS, to develop an ATMP for those parks and Tribal lands where operators have applied to conduct commercial air tours
- Act applies to commercial air tours:
 - Within ½ mile of park
 - Over Tribal lands within or abutting a park
 - 5,000 feet altitude or less above ground level (AGL)



NPATMA Overview

- Does not apply to general aviation, commercial airline, or military flights
- Does not apply to Alaska parks, Grand Canyon National Park, or Rocky Mountain National Park
- Parks with 50 or fewer reported flights per year are exempt from developing an ATMP, unless this exemption is withdrawn by NPS
- If abutting Tribal lands are or may be overflowed, Tribes must be invited as cooperating agency for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance



NPATMA Overview

- Commercial air tour operators apply for FAA Operating Authority in order to operate over National Park System units and abutting Tribal lands
- Commercial air tour operators fall into two categories:
 - Existing commercial air tour operator
 - New entrant commercial air tour operator



Air Tour Management Plans

The objective of any ATMP is to develop acceptable and effective measures to mitigate or prevent the significant adverse impacts, if any, resulting from commercial air tour operations upon natural and cultural resources, visitor experiences, and Tribal lands.



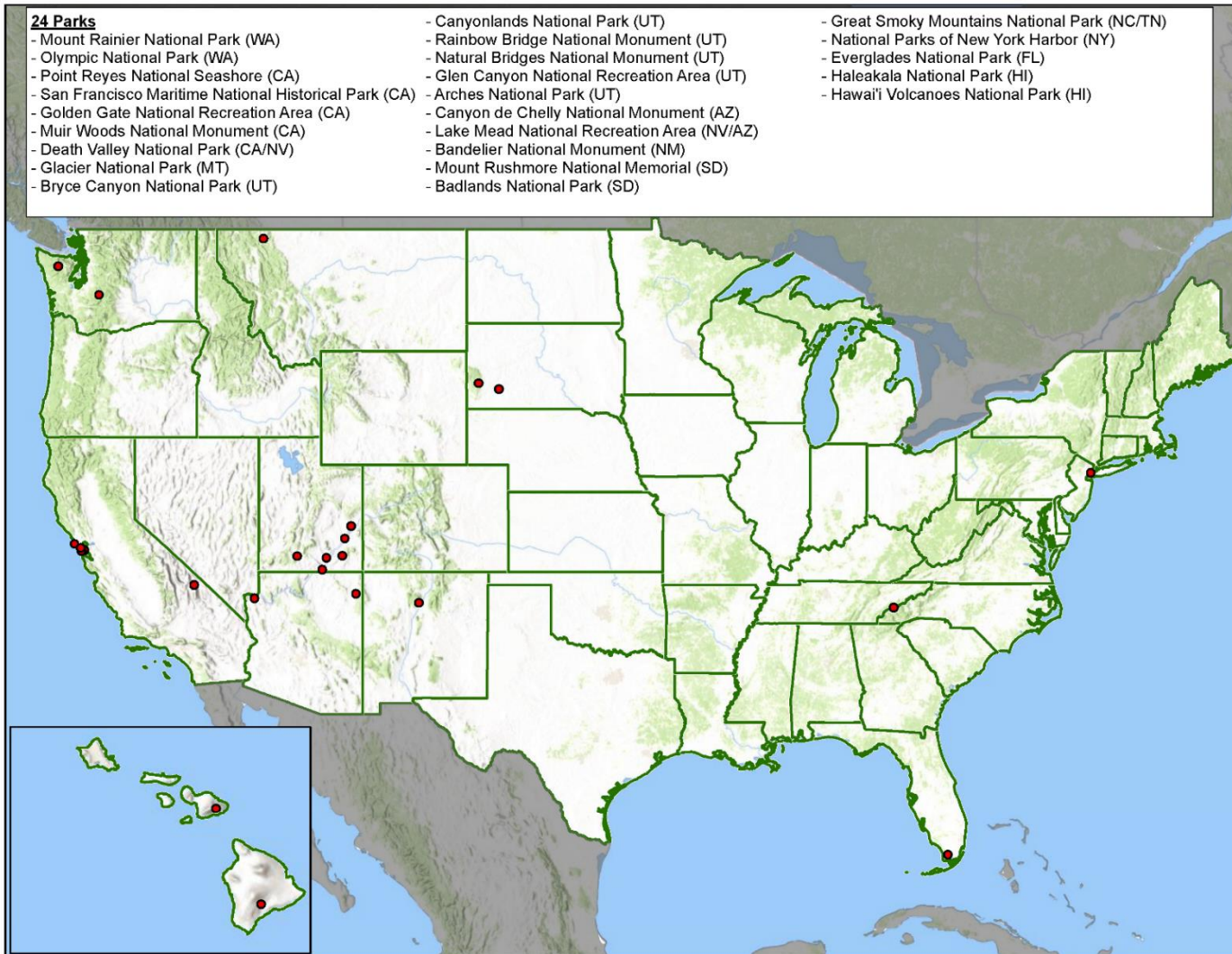
Air Tour Management Plans

An ATMP:

- A. May prohibit commercial air tour operations in whole or in part
- B. May establish conditions for the conduct of air tour operations including routes, altitudes, time-of-day restrictions, restrictions for particular events, maximum number of flights, etc.
- C. Shall apply to all commercial air tour operations within ½ mile outside the boundary of a national park
- D. Shall include incentives for the adoption of quiet aircraft technology
- E. Shall provide for the allocation of opportunities to conduct air tours when the ATMP limits the number of operations
- F. Shall justify and document the need for measures taken pursuant to items (A) through (E), above, and include such justifications in the record of decision



ATMP Parks



ATMP Development

- For each ATMP, the agencies will:
 1. Publish proposed ATMPs in the Federal Register;
 2. Hold at least one public meeting;
 3. Comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and other legal requirements; and,
 4. Invite Tribes to participate as cooperating agencies for NEPA compliance in cases where Tribal lands are, or may be, overflown.
- The purpose of today's meeting is to review the components of the draft ATMP.



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Management Plan for:**

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September 27, 2021



Photo Credit: National Park Service (NPS)

Park Overview

- Bryce Canyon National Park preserves 35,835 acres in south-central Utah and contains the largest concentration of hoodoos (irregular columns of rock) found anywhere on Earth.
- Approximately 58% of the Park (20,810 acres) is recommended wilderness, which is managed by the NPS as if it were designated wilderness.

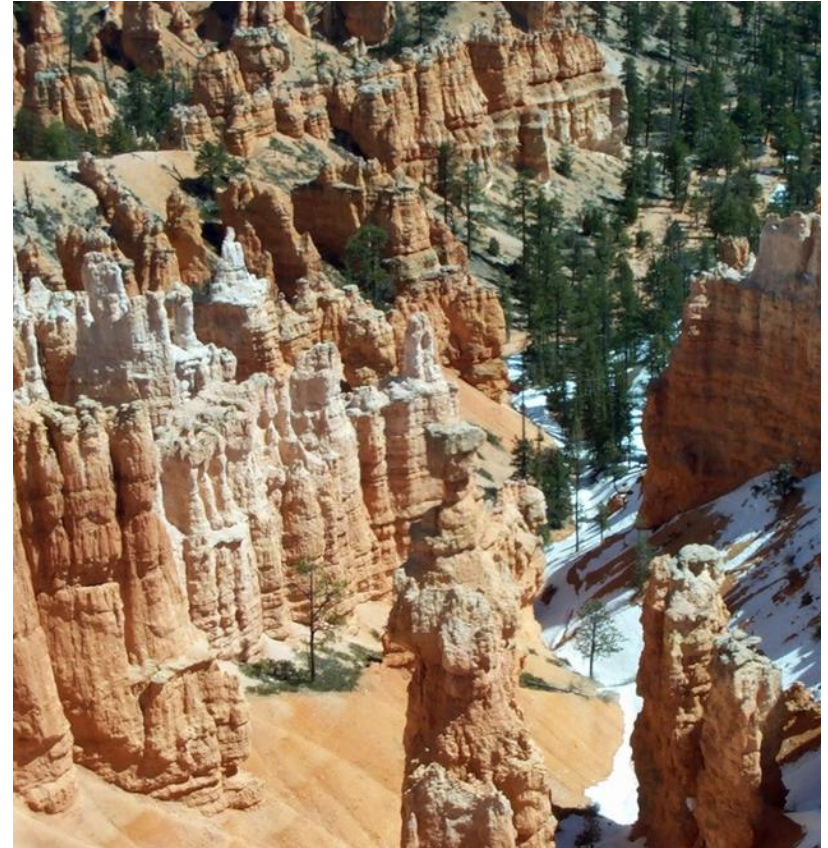
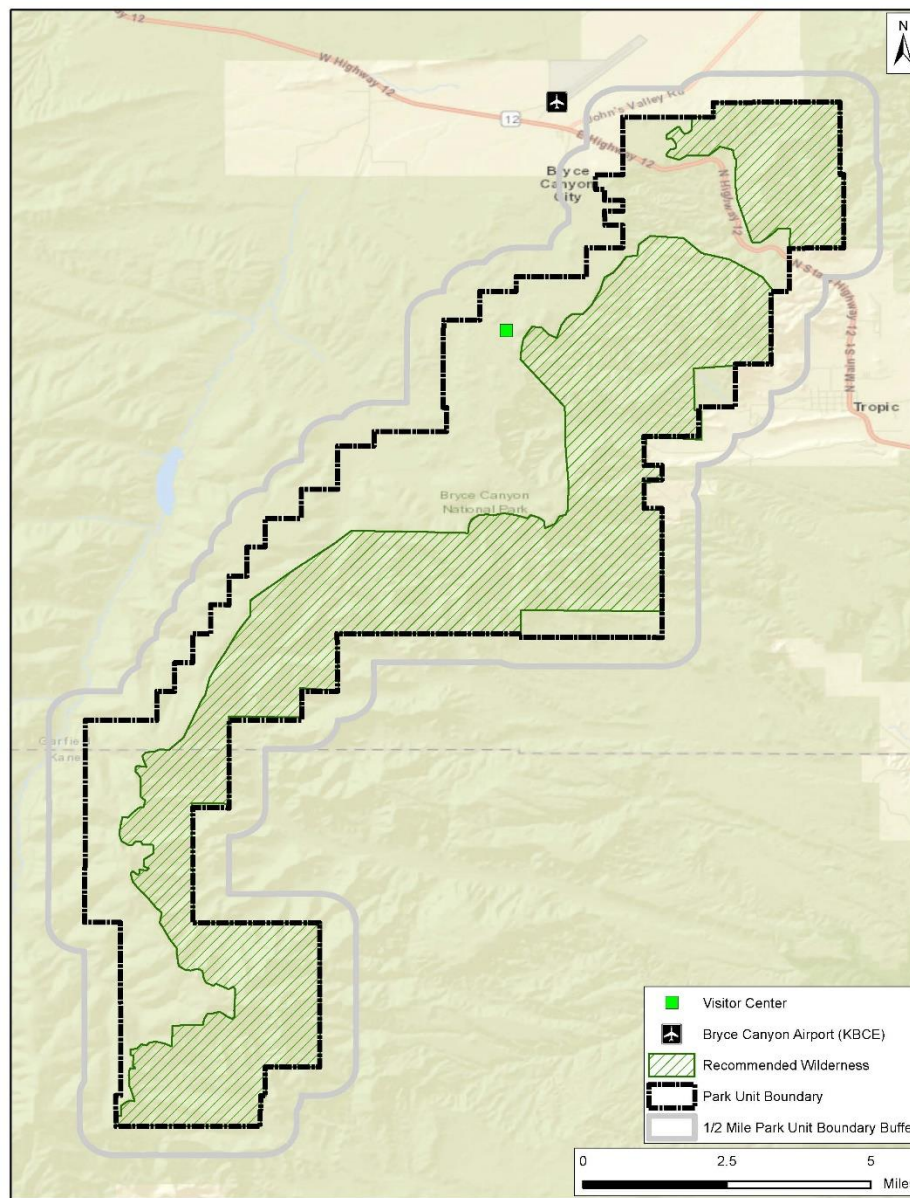


Photo Credit: NPS



Park Resources

- The Park has historically been utilized by Native Americans for hunting and gathering activities, and over 20 Native American tribes traditionally associate with the landscapes within the Park.
- There are over 50 structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including most of the Bryce Canyon trail system, the Bryce Inn, and the Bryce Canyon Lodge.
- More than 100 species of birds, dozens of mammals, and more than 1,000 plant species exist in the Park, including:
 - Utah prairie dog, deer, elk, pronghorn, occasional sightings of bear and mountain lion, and a variety of migratory birds.



Photo Credit: NPS Photo by Brian Roanhorse



Photo Credit: NPS

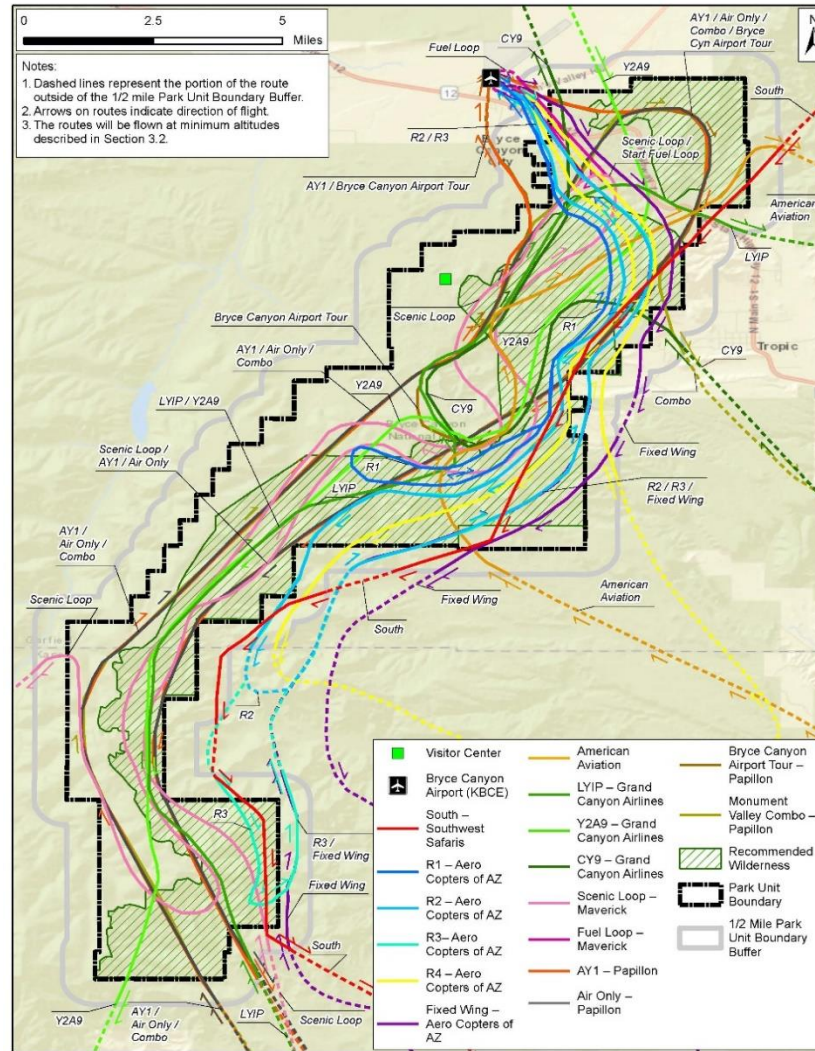
Existing Air Tour Conditions at the Park

- Nine air tour operators hold Interim Operating Authority (IOA) for a total of 3,131 flights each year.
 - Six of those operators have reported flying commercial air tours at the Park from 2017-2019.
- The three-year average of reporting data (2017-2019) is 515 total flights conducted by the six operators each year.
- Annual number of commercial air tours at the Park is limited by the IOA.
- There are no designated parameters on route, time-of-day, or altitude restrictions; no procedures to establish no-fly periods; and no training or education requirements.

Draft ATMP at the Park

Category	Existing Air Tour Conditions	Draft ATMP
Number of Air Tours Authorized Per Year	IOA: 3,131 3 Year Average (2017-2019): 515 flights per year	515
Altitudes	No restrictions, reported altitude ranging between 300 and 1,000 feet (helicopter) above ground level (AGL) and ranging between 1,000 feet and 3,000 feet (fixed wing) AGL	For aircraft between easterly headings 000-179, the route altitudes shall be 13,500 feet (ft.) mean sea level (MSL); and, for aircraft between westerly headings 180-359, the route altitudes shall be 12,500 ft. MSL. The MSL altitudes prescribed are at or above 2,600 ft. AGL.
Aircraft Types	No restrictions, currently reported as helicopter and fixed wing	Specified for each individual operator
Time-of-Day Restrictions	No restrictions, may occur at any time	May operate two hours after sunrise until two hours before sunset
Day-of-Week Restrictions	No restrictions, may occur on any day of the week	The NPS can establish temporary no-fly periods for special events or planned Park management.
Required Reporting and Additional Requirements	Semi-annual reporting requirement; no additional requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Semi-annual reporting requirement ▪ Operator training when made available by NPS ▪ Option for annual meeting ▪ Specified in-flight communications frequency

Proposed Air Tour Routes



Justification for Measures Taken

- Annual flight limits are intended to protect park soundscapes, visitor experience, cultural resources, wilderness character, and wildlife.
- Condition that commercial air tours will fly no lower than 2,600 ft. AGL, referencing the topographic high point within ½ mile of the flight path, complies with guidance for raptor protection including threatened, endangered and migratory birds as stated in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Guidelines for Raptor Protection from Human and Land Use Disturbances (2002).



Justification for Measures Taken

- Reducing the intensity of air tour noise to visitors on the ground would improve wilderness character and visitor experience.
- Total number of air tours proposed under this draft ATMP would be consistent with the existing air tours reported over the Park.
- Operator training/education and annual meeting facilitate effective implementation of the ATMP.



National Environmental Policy Act

- The FAA and the NPS are complying with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in development of the draft ATMP.
- NEPA requires that the agencies:
 - Consider the human and natural environment that could be affected by their action (ATMP).
 - Determine the appropriate level of NEPA review.
 - Prepare associated environmental review documents.
- At this time, the FAA and the NPS have conducted an initial impact analysis and are considering developing the ATMP under an NPS Categorical Exclusion.
- The agencies will consider public comments on the ATMP, information obtained during consultations, and fully assess the environmental impacts before making a final decision on the appropriate level of environmental review.



Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

- The FAA and the NPS are complying with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act in development of the draft ATMP.
- Section 106 includes the requirement that the agencies:
 - Define the Undertaking and Identify Consulting Parties
 - Determine the Area of Potential Effects and Identify Historic Properties
 - Assess Effects to Historic Properties
 - Resolve Adverse Effects, if Any, to Historic Properties
- The FAA and the NPS have initiated consultation with the relevant SHPO, Tribes, and Consulting Parties.



Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act

- The FAA and the NPS are complying with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in development of the draft ATMP.
- Section 7 includes the requirement that the agencies:
 - Ensure their actions do not jeopardize the existence of any species listed under ESA or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitat.
- The NPS and FAA have begun early coordination with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and anticipate a determination of may affect, not likely to adversely affect the California condor.



Public Review of the Draft ATMP

- The FAA and the NPS invite comments from the public, agencies, Tribes, and other interested parties on the draft ATMP.
- Comments must be received on or before October 3, 2021.
- Submit your comments:
 - Online: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/BRCAATMP>
 - Via Mail:
National Park Service
Natural Sounds & Night Skies Division
Bryce Canyon ATMP
1201 Oakridge Dr., Suite 100
Fort Collins, CO 80525



Next Steps

- Following the end of the public comment period, the FAA and the NPS will:
 - Review the comments and use these to inform the final ATMP.
 - Continue to coordinate and complete Tribal, Section 106, and Section 7 consultations.
 - Conclude the NEPA process by signing a decision document.
- Upon the completion of the public comment period, consultations, and NEPA process, the ATMP will be finalized. The final ATMP will be available on the FAA and the NPS websites.
- Once the final ATMP is in place, the FAA will update Operations Specifications for each air tour operator.



Questions and Comments

- **During the meeting**, please submit questions using the Google form posted by the FAA in the chat area of the social media platform you are using (Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube).
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- **After the meeting**, please submit your comments for the record on or before October 3, 2021, at:
 - Online: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/BRCAATMP>
 - Via Mail:

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