

National Parks Air Tour Management Program



**Federal Aviation
Administration**



**National Park
Service**

**WELCOME – WE WILL
BEGIN SHORTLY**

September 21, 2021



Photo Credit: National Park Service (NPS) Photo by Tim Rains

National Parks Air Tour Management Program



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**Draft Air Tour
Management Plan for:**

**Glacier
National Park**

September 21, 2021



Photo Credit: National Park Service (NPS) Photo by Tim Rains

Welcome

- Thank you for joining us today.
- Today's meeting focuses on the draft Air Tour Management Plan for Glacier 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
- **Pete Webster**, Acting Superintendent, Glacier 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 Glacier 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 6:00 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 21, 2021



Photo Credit: National Park Service (NPS) Photo by Tim Rains

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 overflown, 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.

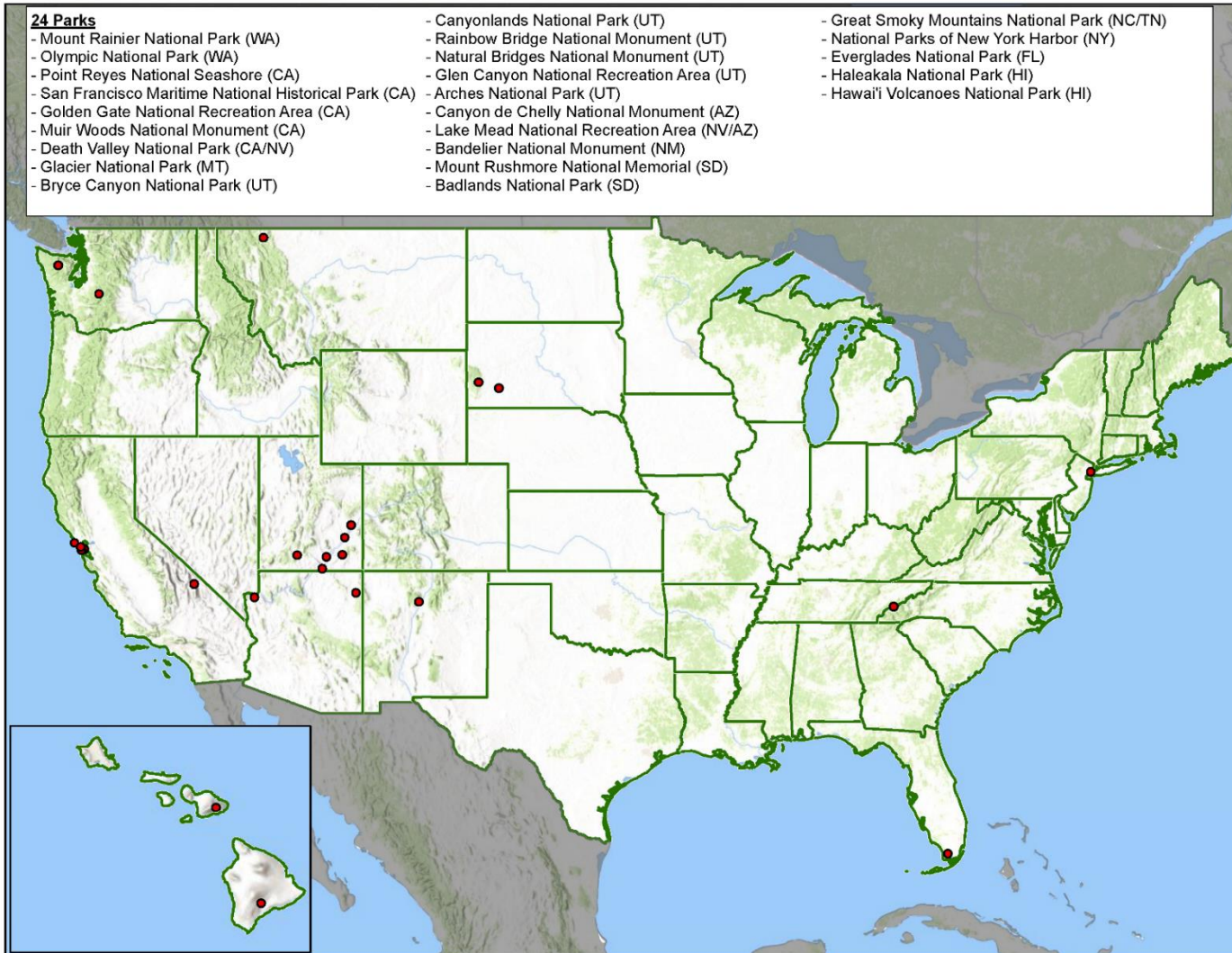


Air Tour Management Plans

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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Park Overview

- Glacier National Park consists of 1,013,839 acres in northern Montana and is bordered to the north by Waterton Lakes National Park in Canada.
- The Park preserves the scenic glacially carved landscape, wildlife, natural processes, and cultural heritage at the heart of the Crown of the Continent and represents one of the largest, most intact ecosystems in North America.
- Glacier is designated an International Biosphere Reserve and, together with Waterton Lakes National Park, is the world's first International Peace park, a World Heritage Site, and the world's first Transboundary Dark Sky Park.



Photo Credit: NPS Photo by Tim Rains



Park Resources

- Numerous historic districts, national historic landmarks, national register listed, and eligible cultural resources have been identified throughout the Park.
- 91% of the Park (927,550 acres) is recommended wilderness and, pursuant to the 2006 NPS Management Policies, is managed in accordance with the Wilderness Act.
- The Park protects important habitat for numerous wildlife species including state and/or federally listed:
 - Endangered Species Act-listed grizzly bear and Canada lynx
 - State listed sensitive wolverine, bald eagle, golden eagle, peregrine falcon, and loons
 - Wildlife include black bear, wolves, mountain goats and bighorn sheep



Photo Credit: NPS



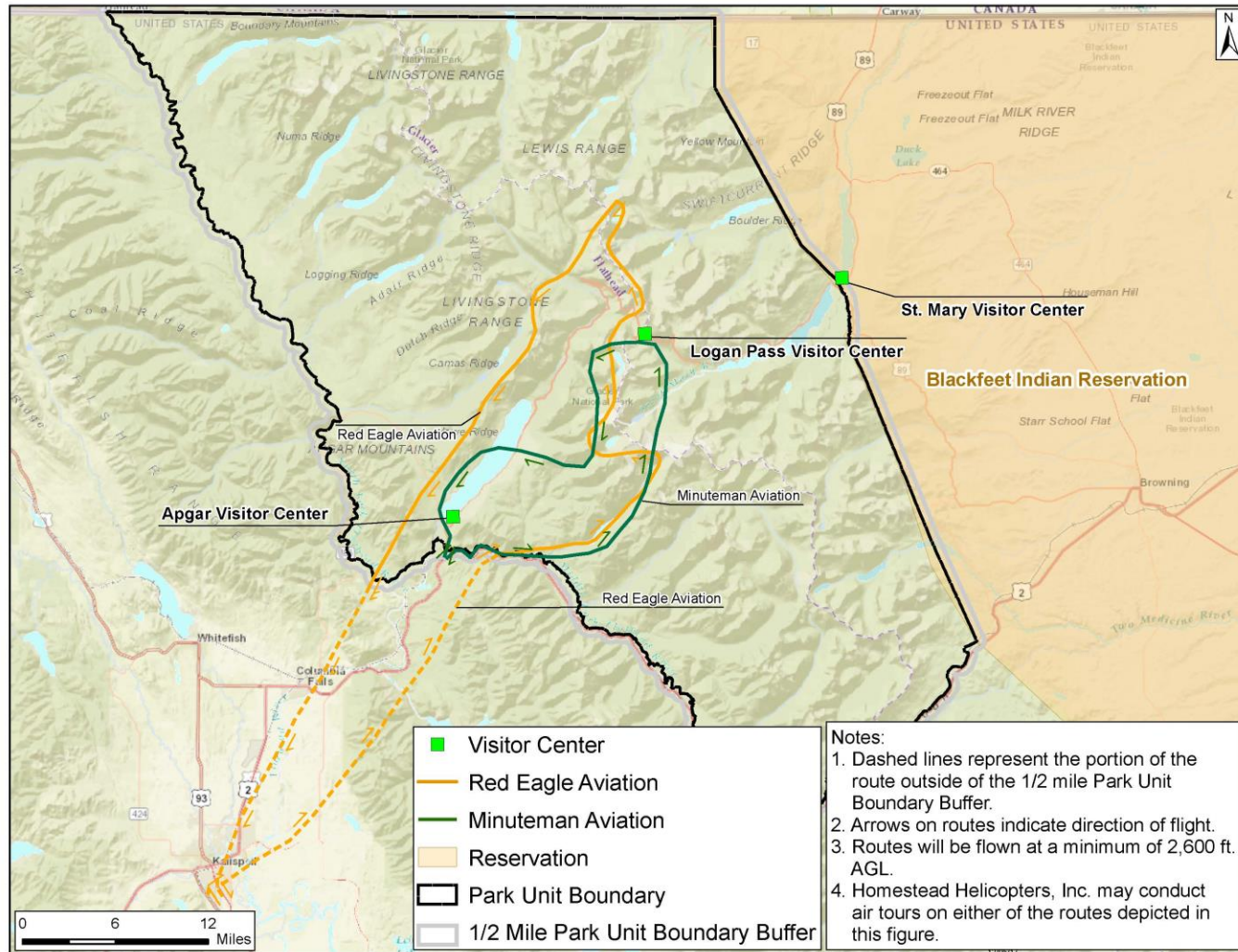
Existing Air Tour Conditions at the Park

- The three-year average of reporting data (2017-2019) included five operators; however, in 2021 two of these operators surrendered their operating certificates.
- Of the remaining three operators, there is a combined Interim Operating Authority (IOA) of 891 and the three-year average is 144 flights.
- 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; and no procedures to establish no-fly periods.

Draft ATMP at the Park

Category	Existing Air Tour Conditions	Draft ATMP
Number of Air Tours Authorized Per Year	IOA: 891 3 Year Average (2017-2019): 144 flights per year	144
Altitudes	No restrictions, reported altitude currently ranging between 7,500 feet and 10,500 feet mean sea level (MSL)	No lower than 2,600 feet (ft) above ground level (AGL)
Aircraft Types	No restrictions, currently reported as helicopter and fixed wing	Specifications for each individual operator
Time-of-Day Restrictions	No restrictions, may occur at any time	May operate one hour after sunrise until one hour 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 ▪ Option for annual meeting ▪ Wildlife avoidance ▪ Daily air tour limitation ▪ Annual allocation adjustment ▪ Hovering prohibited ▪ Specified in-flight communications frequency

Proposed Air Tour Routes



Draft ATMP at the Park

- The annual number of commercial air tours authorized under this ATMP will be automatically adjusted if an operator closes its business, sells its business, or otherwise ceases operations by reducing the total number of authorized air tours by the number of air tours allocated to the operator that is no longer operating.
- Operating authority or allocations under this ATMP may not be assumed by a successor purchaser of an air tour operator's business or transferred under any other circumstances.
- The agencies will not consider applications from new entrant operators and will not authorize commercial air tours by a successor in interest to any of the operators identified by purchase, merger, or otherwise.
- No operator may conduct more than 3 commercial air tours per day.



Justification for Measures Taken

- Conditions that required lateral or altitude adjustments once operators become aware of denning sites, feeding areas, or other known areas of congregation for ungulates, Canada lynx, and grizzly bear, are intended to protect these and other species.
- Aircraft specifications and air tour routes are consistent with aircraft-specific guidance from U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Montana to avoid impacts to core habitat for the grizzly bear.
- Altitude restrictions of 2,600ft AGL are consistent with guidance for raptor protection.

Justification for Measures Taken

- Annual and daily flight limits are intended to protect park soundscapes, visitor experience, wilderness character, and wildlife.
- The ATMP is consistent with the Park's General Management Plan and subsequent planning efforts in that natural sounds and visitor enjoyment are preserved by addressing noise issues, including a provision in agreement with the FAA to phase out commercial air tours through attrition.
- Annual meeting to 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 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 FAA and the NPS have completed a preliminary assessment and do not anticipate impacts to listed species or designated critical habitat.



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/GlacierATMP>
 - Via Mail:

National Park Service
Natural Sounds & Night Skies Division
Glacier 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/GlacierATMP>
 - Via Mail:

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