

# National Parks Air Tour Management Program



**Federal Aviation  
Administration**



**National Park  
Service**

**WELCOME – WE WILL  
BEGIN SHORTLY**

**September 20, 2021**



Photo Credit: National Park Service (NPS) photo by Kait Thomas

# National Parks Air Tour Management Program



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**National Park  
Service**

**Draft Air Tour  
Management Plan for:**

**Arches National  
Park**

**September 20, 2021**



Photo Credit: National Park Service (NPS) photo by Kait Thomas

# Welcome

- Thank you for joining us today.
- Today's meeting focuses on the draft Air Tour Management Plan for the Arches 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

- **Eric Elmore**, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of Environment and Energy, FAA
- **Vicki Ward**, Overflights Program Manager, Natural Sounds and Night Skies Division, NPS
- **Patty Trap**, Superintendent, Arches National Park
- **Matt Van Scoyoc**, Ecologist, Southeast Utah Group, NPS



# 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 Arches 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.



# National Parks Air Tour Management Program



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

**September 20, 2021**



Photo Credit: National Park Service (NPS) photo by Kait Thomas

# 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:

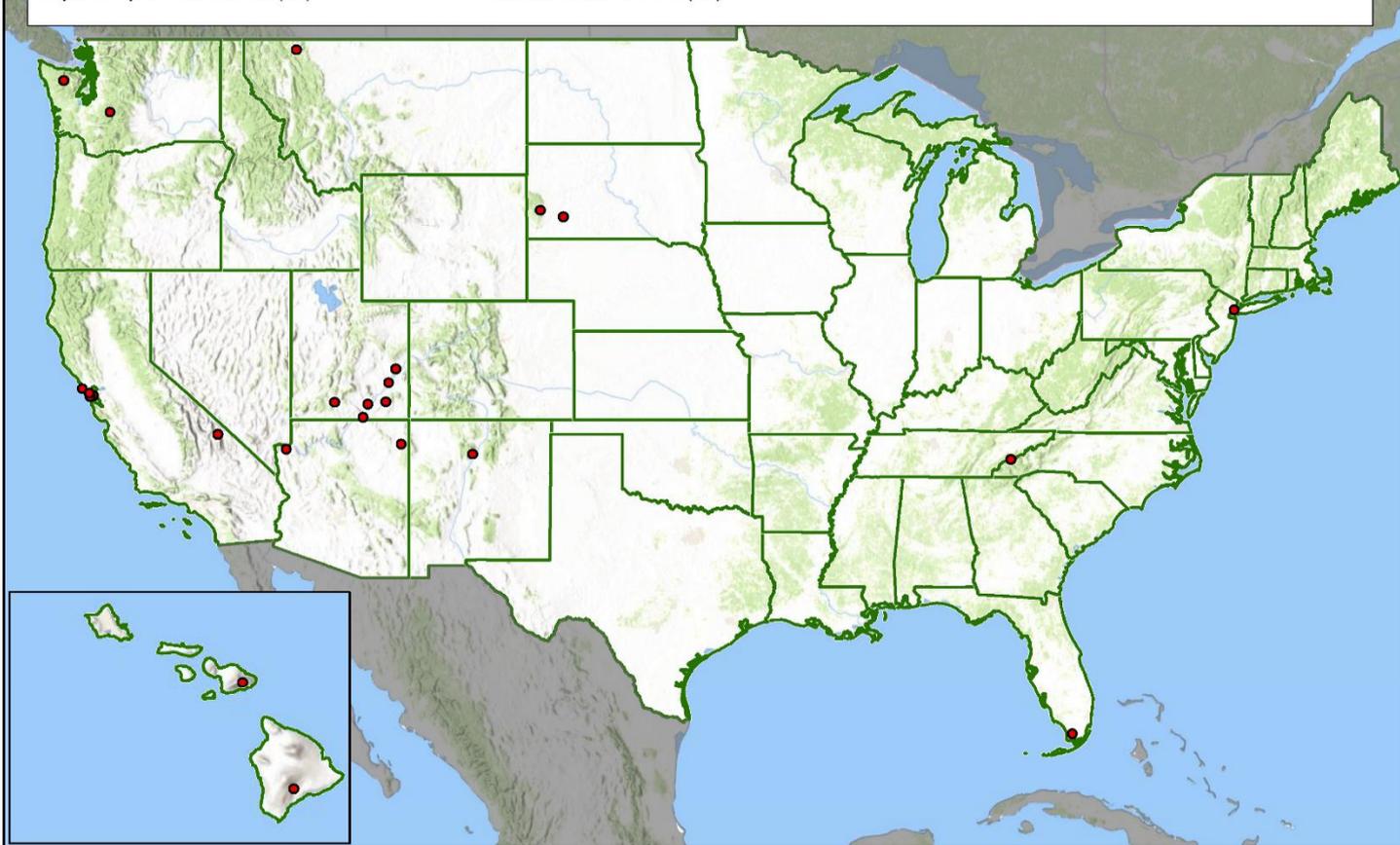
- A. May prohibit commercial air tour operations in whole or in part
- B. May establish conditions for the conduct of air tour operations including routes, altitudes, time-of-day restrictions, restrictions for particular events, maximum number of flights, etc.
- C. Shall apply to all commercial air tour 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

## 24 Parks

- Mount Rainier National Park (WA)
- Olympic National Park (WA)
- Point Reyes National Seashore (CA)
- San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park (CA)
- Golden Gate National Recreation Area (CA)
- Muir Woods National Monument (CA)
- Death Valley National Park (CA/NV)
- Glacier National Park (MT)
- Bryce Canyon National Park (UT)
- Canyonlands National Park (UT)
- Rainbow Bridge National Monument (UT)
- Natural Bridges National Monument (UT)
- Glen Canyon National Recreation Area (UT)
- Arches National Park (UT)
- Canyon de Chelly National Monument (AZ)
- Lake Mead National Recreation Area (NV/AZ)
- Bandelier National Monument (NM)
- Mount Rushmore National Memorial (SD)
- Badlands National Park (SD)
- Great Smoky Mountains National Park (NC/TN)
- National Parks of New York Harbor (NY)
- Everglades National Park (FL)
- Haleakala National Park (HI)
- Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park (HI)



# 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:**

**Arches National  
Park**

**September 20, 2021**



Photo Credit: National Park Service (NPS) photo by Kait Thomas

# Park Overview

- Arches National Park consists of 76,679 acres of high desert on the Colorado Plateau in southeastern Utah.
- The Park contains over 2,000 natural stone arches and hundreds of soaring pinnacles, massive rock fins, and giant balanced rocks. Approximately 96% of the land area of the Park is recommended wilderness, which is managed as designated wilderness by the NPS pursuant to the 2006 NPS Management Policies.



Photo Credit: NPS Photo by Neal Herbert



# Park Resources

- Land within the Park holds spiritual and cultural significance for Tribes, including:
  - Paleoindian, Archaic, Fremont, ancestral Pueblo, Paiute and Ute archeological sites
  - Natural arches that are considered sacred
- Park resources are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including petroglyphs and pictographs and a segment of the Old Spanish National Historic Trail.
- Park serves as habitat for federally listed threatened and endangered species, including the southwestern willow flycatcher and the western yellow-billed cuckoo.



Photo Credit: NPS Photo by Neal Herbert



Photo Credit: NPS

# Existing Air Tour Conditions at the Park

- Eight commercial air tour operators hold Interim Operating Authority (IOA) for a total of 566 flights each year.
  - Five of those operators have not reported flying commercial air tours at the Park since reporting began in 2013. Three operators currently conduct commercial air tours.
- The three-year average of reporting data (2017-2019) is 309 flights conducted in total by the three 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.

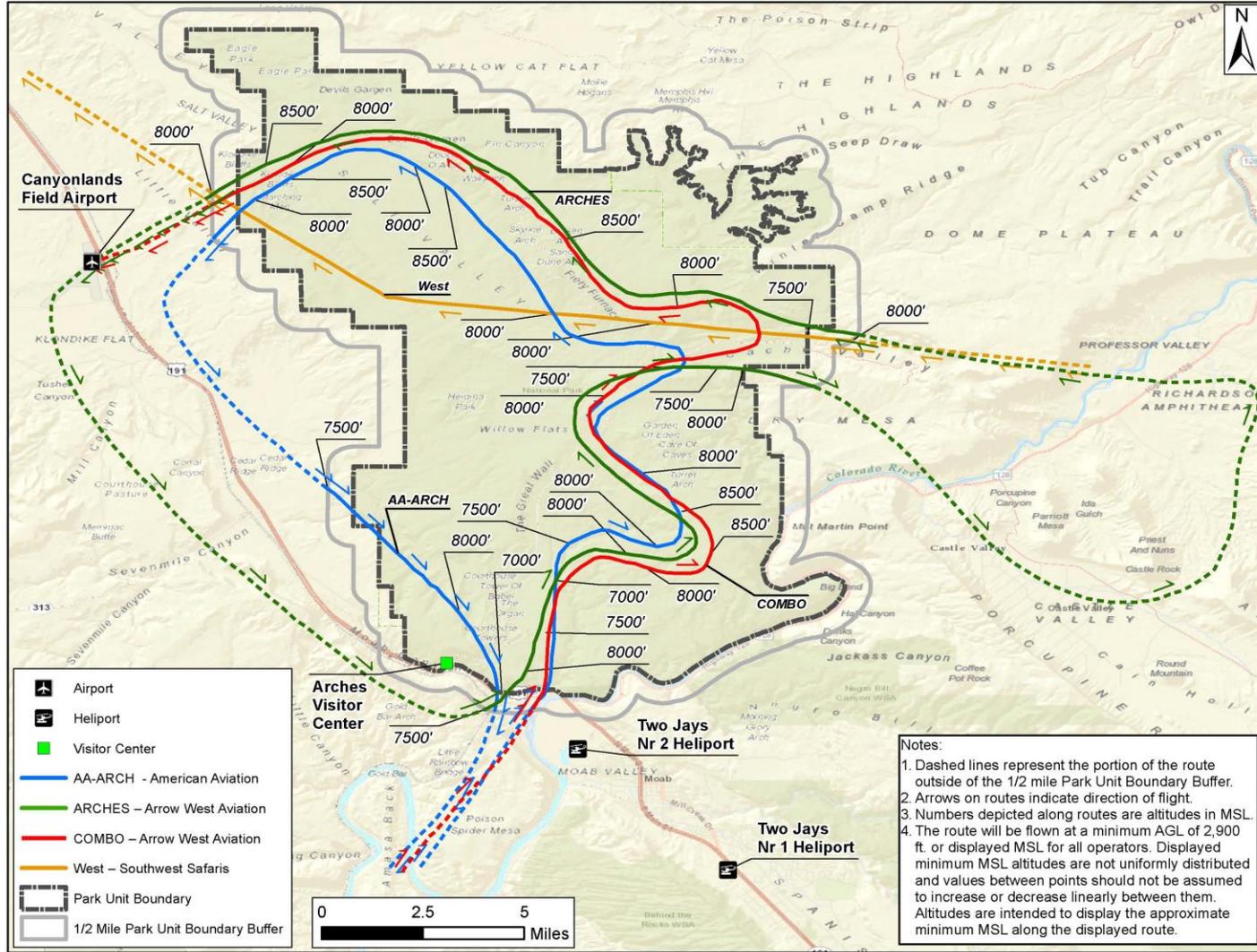


# Draft ATMP at the Park

Category	Existing Air Tour Conditions	Draft ATMP
Number of Air Tours Authorized Per Year	IOA: 566 3 Year Average (2017-2019): 309 flights per year	309
Altitudes	No restrictions, reported altitude currently ranging between 1,000 feet and 2,900 feet AGL	No lower than 2,900 ft. above ground level (AGL)
Aircraft Types	No restrictions, currently reported as fixed wing	Specifications for each operator
Time-of-Day Restrictions	No restrictions, reported air tours currently between 7:30 a.m. – 7:30 p.m. local 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"> <li>▪ Semi-annual reporting requirement</li> <li>▪ Operator training when made available by NPS</li> <li>▪ Option for annual meeting</li> <li>▪ Specified in-flight communications frequency</li> </ul>



# 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 2,900 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 the 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 for the Mexican spotted owl and 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/ArchesATMP>
  - Via Mail:
    - National Park Service
    - Natural Sounds & Night Skies Division
    - Arches 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/ArchesATMP>

- Via Mail:

National Park Service  
Natural Sounds & Night Skies Division  
Arches ATMP  
1201 Oakridge Dr., Suite 100  
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