



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
ZION NATIONAL PARK
1 Zion Blvd. (State Route 9)
Springdale, Utah 84767



PUBLIC USE LIMITATION VISITOR EXPERIENCE, SAFETY, & RESOURCE PROTECTION

By order of the Superintendent of Zion National Park (ZION) and under authority of Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, Sections 1.5(a)(1) and (2), 1.5(d) and 1.6 ([36 CFR 1.5](#); [36 CFR 1.6](#)):

Starting Friday, April 1, 2022 at 12:01 am, the following use limitations are in effect within ZION:

- All persons accessing the chained section of Angels Landing must have, in addition to a park entrance pass, a valid Angels Landing Day-Use Permit.

A permit lottery for Angels Landing Trail will be made available to the public on [Recreation.gov](#) in January 2022. Beginning in April 2022, hikers on the chained section of Angels Landing Trail (0.5 mile) will be required to obtain a Day-Use Permit and show valid photo identification of the permit holder (or listed alternate) prior to accessing and while utilizing the trail. Applicants may enter each lottery once and apply for up to six (6) permits in their application. A permit is needed for every person, including the applicant. Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) holders will work through the ZION commercial services program for requirements surrounding permits and commercially guiding on Angels Landing Trail. This permit system for Angels Landing is a temporary pilot program which intends to provide the public with opportunities to hike to Angels Landing while improving perceptions of safety and visitor experience by engaging the desired experience outcomes expressed during the civic engagement period and those reported in a visitor use survey. Additionally, the pilot program aims to proactively mitigate observed impacts to environmental resources as well as inform future visitor use management research and planning.

Visitor use at ZION, a unit of the National Park Service (NPS), has dramatically increased in recent years leading to periods of substantial crowding and congestion, impacts to natural and cultural resources, overtaxed facilities, and over-extended staff throughout the park. In 2010, the park received 2.7 million total visitors and in 2019 visitation reached nearly 4.5 million. In the same period, visitors, staff, and park neighbors reported increased crowding, longer lines to ride the shuttle, a lack of parking, a decline in opportunities for solitude, and visible wear on facility infrastructure, i.e. trails and restrooms. These observations became most apparent in areas leading to popular hikes such as Angels Landing. Resource impacts correlated with visitor behavior have been observed in the area and range from graffiti (e.g. carving into and/or stacking rocks) to an increased presence of trash which can be particularly harmful to protected birds (i.e. [Condors](#)) and other wildlife species we share these areas with.

To address these concerns, ZION initiated research efforts in 2017 to better understand hiker patterns along the trail and how visitors experience Angels Landing. In 2019, more than 300,000 visitors ascended the trail and results from the research were used to pilot an informal means of managing hiker flow on the chains section over the five (5) holiday weekends where the park anticipated high visitor levels. Multiple methods were used to communicate the dates that the NPS would be managing visitor access to Angel Landing to include news releases and social media posts. Using various staffing models, park officials metered hikers onto the trail, by retaining hikers at the Grotto trailhead in proximity to water, shade, and

restrooms. In 2020, the Angels Landing Pilot Permit Program was being developed; however, because of the park having to adapt to COVID-19 safety measures the formal pilot permit program was postponed. In response to COVID-19, ZION stood up a system to distribute tickets to use the park shuttle system from July 2020 to May 2021. These efforts allowed the park to understand how managing a timed entry system for Zion Canyon can influence visitor use patterns and levels, including at Angels Landing. It also provided a learning opportunity for field level implementation of managed access systems.

In 2021, the ZION Leadership Team opted to manage Memorial Day weekend as a “planned event” to engage the Incident Command System (ICS) for an anticipated 85,000 visitors. Again, rather than forming lines for Angels Landing at Scout Lookout where there would not be any shade or water during the multi-hour wait, ZION staff opted to move the waiting line to the Grotto where more amenities were available to the public. The metering rate was set at 120 individuals departing the trailhead per hour to reflect quality benchmarks developed as a part of the visitor use research originating in 2017 as well as the various management efforts implemented at the park by ZION staff. Other holiday weekends managed throughout 2021 did not utilize ICS but ZION staff did continue to coordinate hiker flow rates across Angels Landing as previously executed in 2019. This background understanding was used to formulate the pilot program for 2022.

Without any action, high visitation and pedestrian congestion on Angels Landings is expected to persist which could continue to exacerbate the degradation of park resources and visitor enjoyment into the future. This public use limitation will focus on preventing adverse impacts to the surrounding environment and endeavors to increase the quality of experience on Angels Landing by reducing hiker gridlock on Angels Landing and prevent resource damage from visitor concentration and crowding at Scout Lookout, induced by the aforementioned gridlock. This may result in lower visitor use levels at the site-specific location; however, the Angels Landing permit program will not provide significant relief to other high demand and frequently congested areas throughout ZION, such as The Narrows, where visitor use pressures may be anticipated to shift.

The park has completed extensive civic engagement on this issue and found public and elected leaders support for moving forward with a pilot permit program beginning in 2022. In accordance with Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 1.6(c) ([36 CFR 1.6](#)) and Section 1.7 ([36 CFR 1.7](#)), this statement as well as information detailing [Visitor Use Research](#) at ZION and the decision-making process have been made publicly available on the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment website ([PEPC](#)).

Jeffrey Bradybaugh
Superintendent, Zion National Park