

# National Parks Air Tour Management Program



**Federal Aviation  
Administration**



**National Park  
Service**

**WELCOME – WE WILL  
BEGIN SHORTLY**

**August 16, 2021**



Photo Credit: U.S. DOT Volpe Center

# National Parks Air Tour Management Program



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**Draft Air Tour  
Management Plan for:**

**Mount Rainier  
National Park**

**August 16, 2021**



Photo Credit: U.S. DOT Volpe Center

# Welcome

- Thank you for joining us today.
- Today's meeting focuses on the draft Air Tour Management Plan for Mount Rainier 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
- **Teri Tucker**, Planning and Compliance Branch Chief, Mount Rainier 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 Mount Rainier National Park's PEPC site.
- These written comments become part of the official record.
- Please note that written comments must be submitted on or before August 28, 2021.



# Format of Meeting

- This meeting will be 90 minutes long.
- We will adjourn at 6:00 pm Pacific 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)**

**August 16, 2021**



Photo Credit: U.S. DOT Volpe Center

# 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 fewer than 50 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 land
- 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.



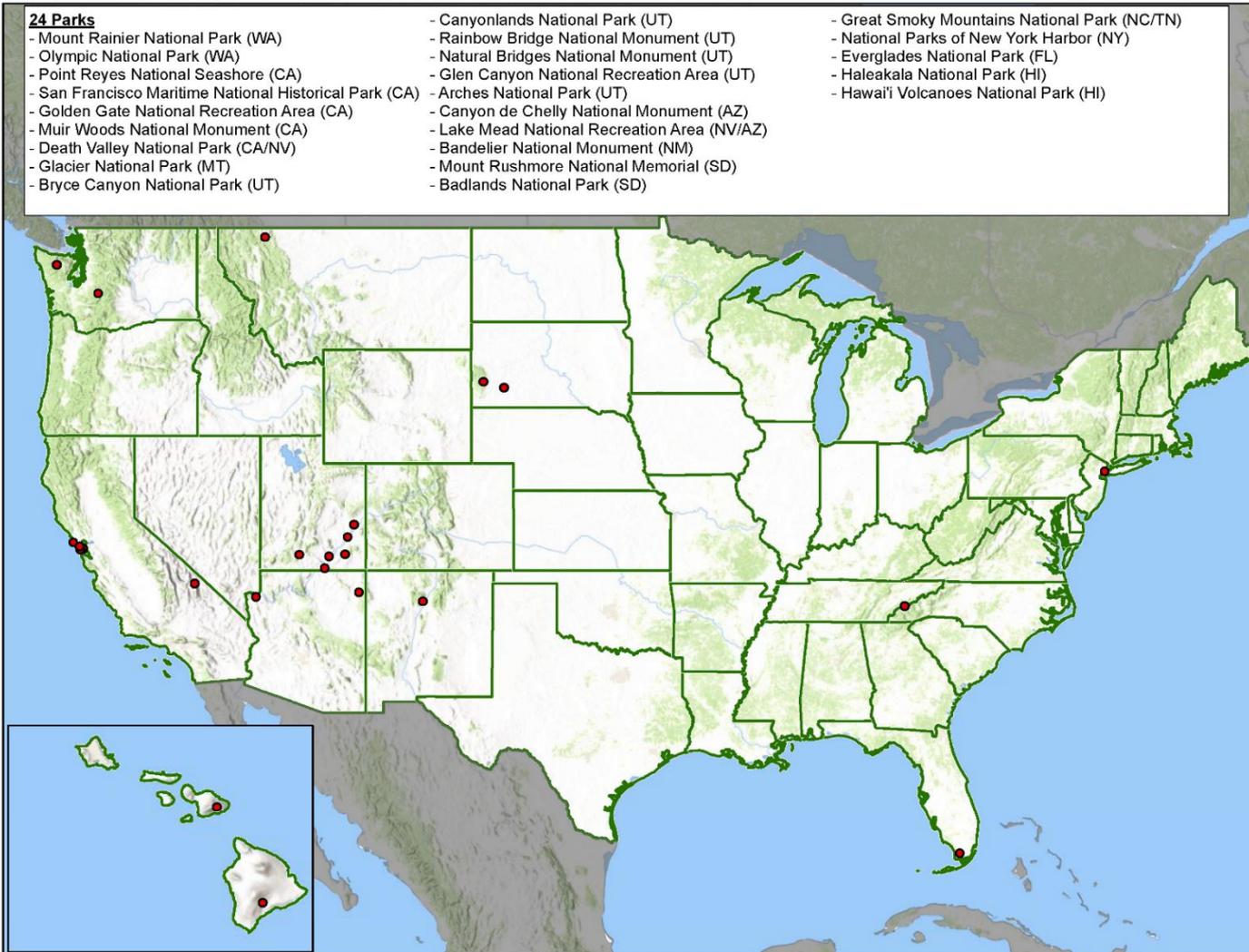
# Air Tour Management Plans

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.



# National Parks Air Tour Management Program



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**Mount Rainier  
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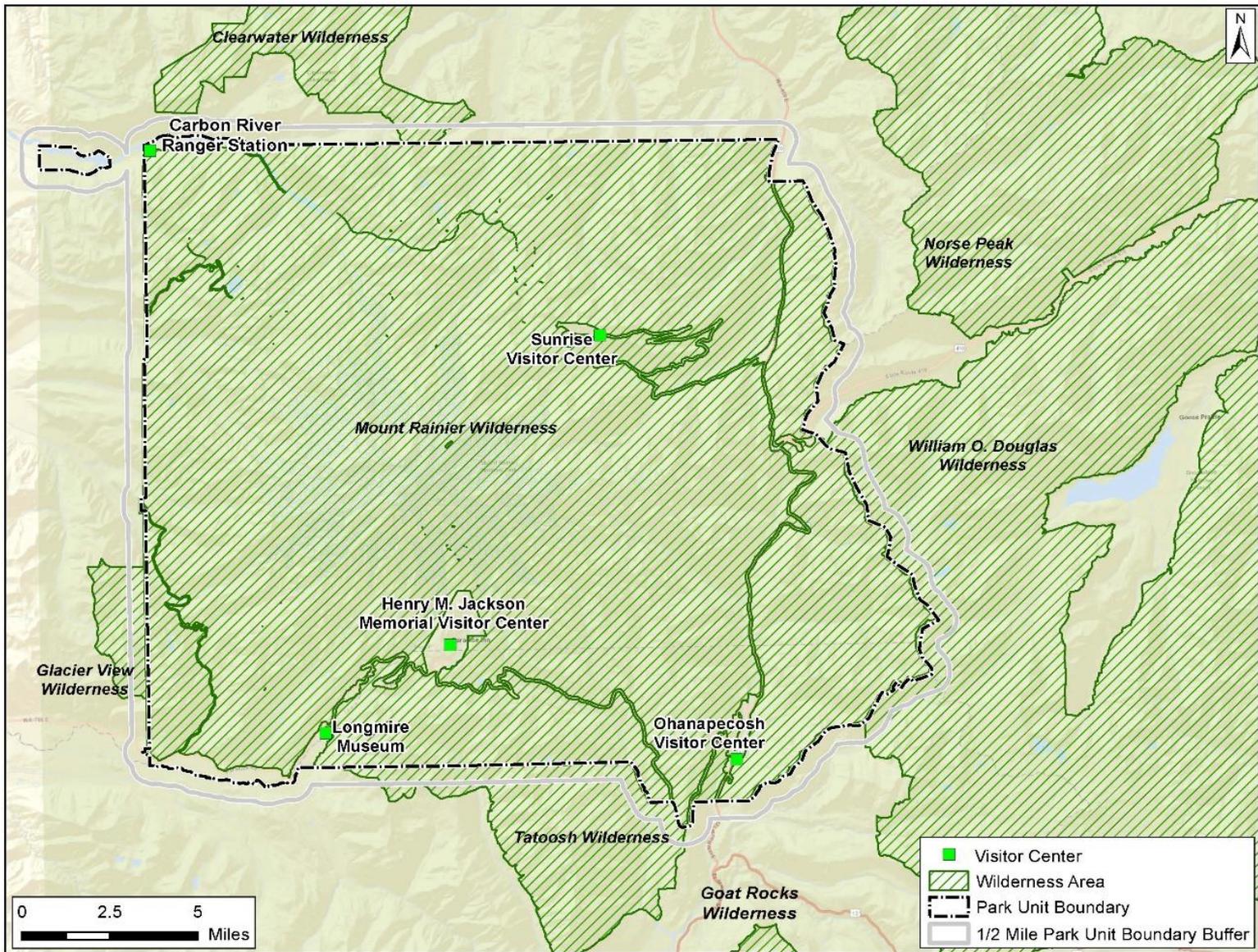
Photo Credit: U.S. DOT Volpe Center

# Park Overview

- Mount Rainier National Park encompasses 236,381 acres in west-central Washington, on the western slope of the Cascade Range.
- Mount Rainier, a snow- and ice-covered volcano and a prominent landmark in the Pacific Northwest, is a focal point of the Park.



Photo Credit: NPS



# Park Resources

- Land within the Park holds spiritual and cultural significance for Tribes.
- Approximately 97 percent of the Park is designated wilderness.
- Park serves as habitat for federally listed threatened and endangered species, including:
  - Marbled murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*)
  - Northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*)
- Mount Rainier National Historic Landmark District shows early master planning of national parks.

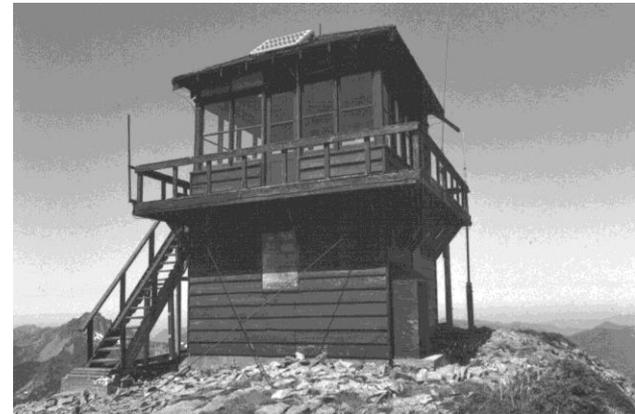


Photo Credits: NPS, MORA

# Existing Air Tour Conditions at the Park

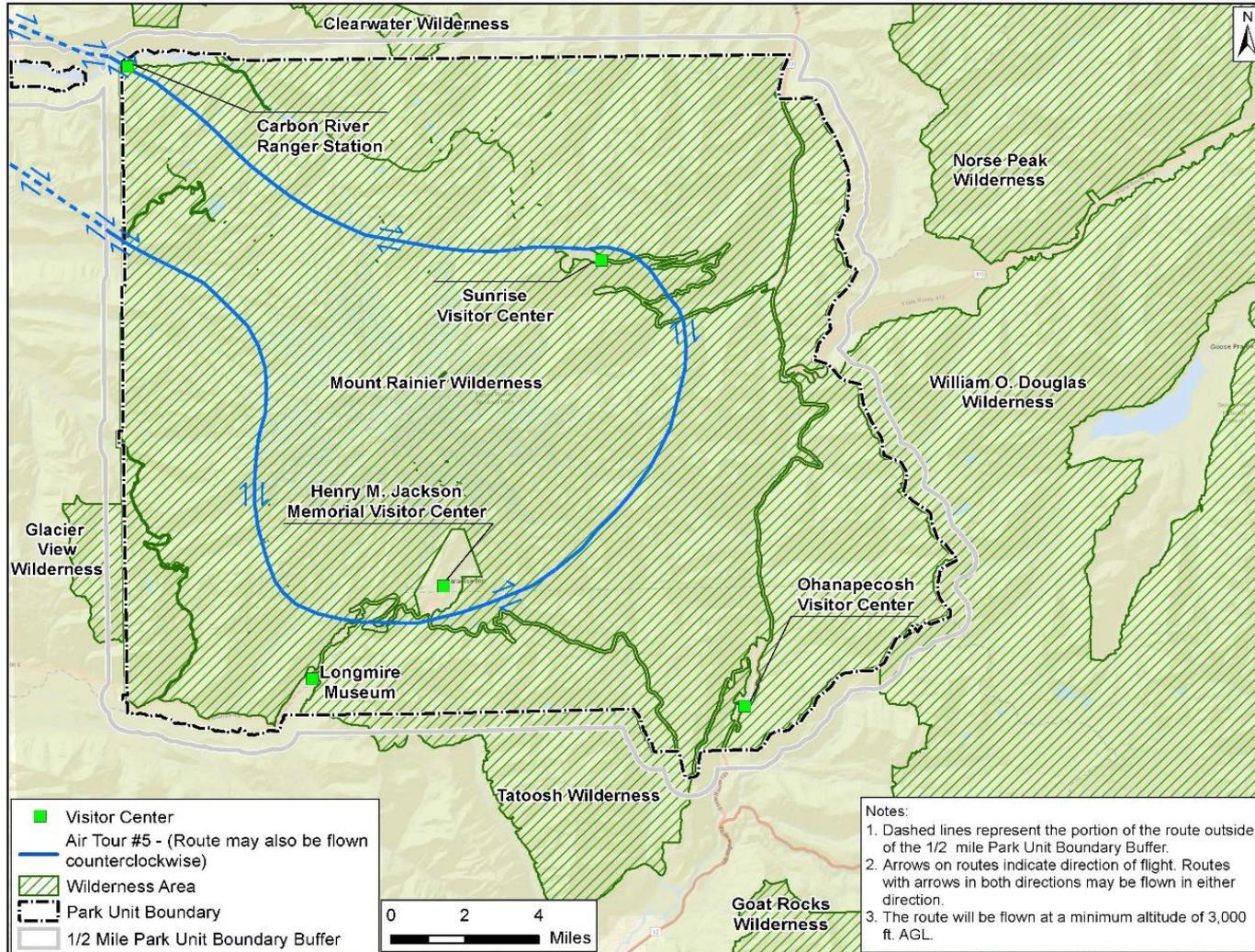
- Two air tour operators currently hold Interim Operating Authority (IOA) for a combined total of 34 flights each year.
- The three-year average of reporting data (2017-2019) is one flight conducted by one operator each year.
- Annual number of commercial air tours at the Park is limited by the IOA.
- 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: 34 3 Year Average (2017-2019): 1 flight per year	1
Altitudes	No restrictions, reported altitude currently 3,000 feet AGL	No lower than 3,000 feet AGL
Aircraft Types	No restrictions, currently reported by single operator as fixed wing	Fixed wing
Time-of-Day Restrictions	No restrictions, reported air tours currently between 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. local time	10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. local time
Day-of-Week Restrictions	No restrictions	No restrictions
Required Reporting and Additional Requirements	Semi-annual reporting requirement; no additional requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No restrictions for particular events</li> <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 Route



# Justification for Measures Taken

- Annual flight limits are intended to protect park soundscapes, visitor experience, wilderness character, and wildlife.
- Condition that commercial air tours may fly no lower than 3,000 ft. AGL would continue current reported air tour activity and is consistent with avoidance recommendations for marbled murrelets and northern spotted owls.
- Time-of-day restrictions avoid disruption to marbled murrelets during peak activity periods for incubation and feeding exchanges during nesting season and would continue current timing of reported air tours.



# 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 must comply 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 environmental review.
  - Prepare associated environmental review documents.
- At this time, the FAA and the NPS 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 working to complete 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 Participants
  - Determine the Area of Potential Effects and Identify Historic Properties
  - Assess Effects to Historic Properties
  - Resolve Adverse Effects to Historic Properties
- The FAA and the NPS have initiated consultation with the 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 effects to listed species or designated critical habitat based on proposed air tour management plan requirements at Mount Rainier National Park.



# 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 August 28, 2021.
- Submit your comments:
  - Online: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/MountRainierATMP>
  - Via Mail:

National Park Service  
Natural Sounds & Night Skies Division  
Mount Rainier ATMP  
1201 Oakridge Dr., Suite 100  
Fort Collins, CO 80525



Photo Credits: NPS, MORA

# 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 considered complete. 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 the 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 August 28, 2021, at:

- Online: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/MountRainierATMP>
- Via Mail:

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