

Rocky Mountain National Park Day Use Visitor Access Strategy (Pre-NEPA) Public Comment Summary Report

Prepared for—

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Introduction

Rocky Mountain National Park (park) has experienced a 44 percent increase in visitation since 2012. Rapid growth in day use visitation and changing use patterns in the park have degraded natural and cultural resources, diminished quality of the visitor experience, increased visitor and staff safety concerns, and created a heavy strain on the park's facilities and ability to perform daily operations.

To address these visitation and use issues, the National Park Service (NPS) intends to prepare a long-range Day Use Visitor Access Strategy (DUVAS) for the park. The purpose of the Rocky Mountain National Park DUVAS will be to provide visitor access in a way that enhances the protection of the fundamental resources and values for which the park was created. The goal of the process will be to identify strategies that will help protect park resources, offer varied opportunities for high quality visitor experiences, enhance visitor and staff safety, and coincide with the park's operational capacity.

At this stage in the process, NPS is beginning to develop potential management strategies and preparing for the future National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. NPS has sought public engagement and input to help identify shared values, clarify key issues, and identify potential management strategies.

Pre-NEPA Public Engagement Process

Public comments were invited for sixty days beginning May 21 through July 19, 2021. NPS extended the public comment period through July 26, 2021, to account for technical difficulties with the Planning, Environment & Public Comment (PEPC) website. During the review period, 571 comment correspondences were submitted to the NPS. All comments were reviewed and coded into categories.

As part of its pre-NEPA public engagement process, NPS hosted two virtual public meetings on Thursday, May 20 and Tuesday, May 25. In total, 271 people attended the public meetings, including 115 on May 21 and 156 on May 25. The content was the same for both meetings and included a Power Point presentation followed by a "Question and Answer" session. The presentation described the planning process, key issues that the plan will be designed to address, and desired conditions. A map of the draft visitor management zones, which helps NPS establish the desired conditions for day users, was also presented during the meetings. NPS posted a recording of the meetings on the park's YouTube channel and posted PDFs of the Power Point presentation and the visitor management zones map on the park's PEPC website.

Public notices of this comment period and meetings were distributed through the following sources:

- A news release posted on the park website and to the NPS's PEPC website: https://parkplanning.nps.gov/ROMO_DUVAS

- A news release sent electronically (via email) to various stakeholders, agencies, and media entities
- Information shared on park's social media channels Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
- Information shared through virtual public meetings

NPS also provided notices and offered to initiate government to government consultation with tribes who may be impacted by the Day Use Visitor Access Strategy. Letters were sent to the following tribes:

- Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, Montana
- Arapaho Tribe of the Wind River Reservation, Wyoming
- Northern Cheyenne Tribe of the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation, Montana
- Northern Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, Oklahoma
- Comanche Nation, Oklahoma
- Shoshone Tribe of the Wind River Reservation, Wyoming
- Southern Ute Indian Tribe of the Southern Ute Reservation, Colorado
- Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah & Ouray Reservation, Utah
- Ute Mountain Tribe of the Ute Mountain Reservation, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah
- White Mesa Ute, Colorado and Utah

Pre-NEPA Public Comments

Correspondence

During the 67-day public comment period, the NPS received 571 correspondences. Of these, 546 were submitted through the NPS PEPC website, 17 were submitted as e-mails, and 8 were letters submitted by either email or standard mail delivery. There were also 7 duplicate correspondences, likely due to technical difficulties with the PEPC site. Most correspondences were from residents of Colorado.

Colorado residents sent the most comments, 446 or 78.1% of total comments. Texas residents sent 18 comments or 3.1%. Missouri residents sent 17 comments or 3.0%. Kansas residents sent 10 comments or 1.7%. Residents of other states combined sent 80 comments or 14.1%.

The following organizations or businesses submitted correspondences during the review period:

- Access Fund
- Back Country Horsemen
- Bell Surveying Company
- Boulder Climbing Community
- EcoLogic LLC
- Estes Park Equestrian Club

- Fishing Club
- Front Range Back Country Horsemen
- National Parks Conservation Association
- River Stone Management
- Rocky Mountain Back Country Horsemen
- Rocky Mountain Holiday Tours LLC
- Starr Auto Sales LLC
- Stewart Management & Booking
- The Stein Cabin Trust - Trustee

Comments Overview

From the 571 correspondences received by NPS, 3,853 comments were extracted and coded into categories.

To provide information to park planners, NPS asked the public to address specific questions in their comments:

- What experiences in Rocky Mountain National Park do you find most important?
- What kind of experiences do you want future visitors/generations to have when they come to Rocky Mountain National Park?
- What issues most interfere with your desired park experience?
- How can the park better protect resources for future generations? What strategies would you like the planning team to consider when brainstorming visitor use management?
- What is the park doing well to manage these issues that you would like to see continue?

NPS park planners are grateful for the number of thoughtful comments received from the public. A diverse group of park users with a diverse set of values and expectations took time to engage in the process and to provide meaningful feedback regarding the park's role in their lives and their desired future conditions.

At times, the diverse backgrounds of commenters led to a diverse list of suggested strategies that were not necessarily congruent. For example, some commenters suggested means of limiting park visitors, such as prohibitions or limits on out-of-state or out-of-country visitors; others, in contrast, expressed concerns about unfairly limiting access, whether due to technology barriers (e.g. internet-based reservations) or physical limitations (lack of or inadequate access and facilities for limited mobility individuals). Similarly, there were a large number of commenters who expressed interest in a "locals-only" pass or entry time and another set of commenters that argued for equality of access based on principals of democracy. Another example is infrastructure: on one hand many expressed support for additional roads, parking areas, trams, or trails in less developed parts of the park; on the other, commenters expressed concern about additional development or paving of the park and urged park planners to preserve the pristine and wild nature of the landscape. A final example is related to fees: many commenters expressed distress regarding the fee for online reservations,

particularly if they already have an annual park pass or a senior pass. In contrast, many others advocated for increased fees or a menu of fees based on different desired uses of the park or the socioeconomic status of park visitors.

Public comments will inform the planning process and will be instrumental as the park builds a set of management strategies for NEPA analysis. A summary of public responses to the NPS question prompts are provided below. Please see the Concern Statements section for a more detailed breakdown of comment themes.

Important Park Experiences

In general, commentors mentioned dispersed recreation opportunities, such as hiking, climbing, and skiing, to be most important in their park experience, followed by day-use activities that park visitors might do in Zone 3 (site seeing, wildlife viewing, driving tours, picnicking, etc.). Commentors also identified preservation of pristine, natural landscapes in wilderness and backcountry areas as important. Opportunities for spontaneous recreation in the park, whether it is a spur of the moment driving tour with an out-of-town guest or a changed climbing date due to weather, were also mentioned as important to their park experience.

Future Visitors/Generations

Commentors stated they want future generations to view and experience pristine, natural landscapes in wilderness and backcountry and to have opportunities for uncrowded and/or dispersed recreation (whether in Zones 1, 2, or 3). They also want future visitors to have opportunities for spontaneous recreation in the park. Some highlighted the importance of maintaining opportunities for multiple generations of a family to recreate together, regardless of physical abilities.

Issues that Interfere with a Desired Park Experience

Commentors were fairly evenly divided on whether a reservation (timed-entry), crowds, traffic, or lack of parking interfere the most with their desired park experience. Poor human behavior, such as irresponsible interactions with wildlife, lack of a “leave no trace” ethic, or general inconsideration or rudeness, was also raised repeatedly as an issue that interferes with a desired park experience, along with other visitor use issues, such as noise.

Inadequate or poorly maintained trails and restroom facilities were other common concerns mentioned by commentors. For example, commentors noted a lack of restroom facilities at popular trailheads and gave specific examples of others in need of repair or servicing. Others mentioned conditions on trails that made use of them difficult or unenjoyable.

Commentors were concerned about access (access/infrastructure for individuals with limited mobility or general park access issues, such as too few park entrances and/or entry gates). For example, some mentioned the added difficulty of finding parking or making a reservation for those with limited mobility or health issues, and that with such medical needs, those visitors need flexibility on the days they visit the park as well as

easy access to vehicle and medical supplies. Others expressed frustration about the limited ways of entering the park and suggested that additional entry gates are needed.

Strategies

Commentors mentioned numerous management strategies and suggested various ideas for improving the strategies already in place at the park. The most suggested strategy by members of the public was a timed entry reservation system or some other means of limiting park visitors or vehicles (or both) in the park. In contrast, many others were very much opposed to this strategy and listed timed entry or other limits as a hindrance to their desired park experience. Of those that expressed support for timed-entry reservations, some commentors prefer its current form, while many others had suggestions for improving it. Of those that expressed opposition to the timed-entry reservation system, suggestions for other systems of limiting vehicles and people (lottery, entrance cap, punch cards, etc.) were listed as preferable.

Other commonly mentioned strategies in order of preference include educating the public (signs, ranger-led programs, online quizzes or courses, QR codes, etc.); an improved and expanded shuttle system; enforcement of park rules; the hiring of more park rangers; and greater use of volunteers and/or opportunities to volunteer. Infrastructure improvements, such as increased or designated parking areas, road and trail construction, new restroom facilities, and an additional visitor center, were listed as popular strategies. Parking-related options (webcams, real-time messaging, etc.), area-specific strategies, seasonal or temporary closures of certain areas or trails, and increased park fees also were frequently mentioned. Members of the public brought up numerous other strategies that are not easily categorized and in some cases are beyond the scope of visitor use management, such as fire restoration, forest management, and wildlife management.

Doing well

Members of the public listed the timed-entry reservation system as the number one thing the park is “doing well”. The shuttle system, park rangers, and park volunteers were also called out frequently as something the park is “doing well.” Members of the public also listed a miscellany of other things they are pleased with, including education and outreach (e.g. ranger talks, junior ranger programs, seeking public input, etc.), road and trails maintenance, webcams and signage, and park resource management (elk, vegetation, etc.).

Other Issues and Concerns

In addition to responding to the NPS question prompts, members of the public also had the opportunity to raise issues and other concerns in a general “comments” section. These topics included the impact of timed-entry on local residents and communities, differences between the east and west sides of the park, issues of potential exclusion with timed-entry (due to age, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, access to technology, etc.), concerns about air pollution and climate change, and visitor safety. The topics brought up by the public in their additional “comments” often overlapped with or repeated the themes of their responses to the specific questions posed by NPS.

Comment Categories

Table 1 provides the list of comment categories, or “codes,” that were used in comment analysis and the number of comments coded to each of these. Comments coded to these categories were used to develop the concern statements presented in the next section of this document.

Table 1. Code Categories and Comment Total per Code		
Code	Code Category Description	Total
	What experiences in Rocky Mountain National Park do you find most important?	
DC1102	IMPORTANT: Dispersed Recreation (climbing, hiking, backpacking, skiing, etc.)	200
DC1104	IMPORTANT: Day Use Activities (site seeing, wildlife viewing, driving tours, picnicking, etc.)	122
DC1103	IMPORTANT: Wilderness/Backcountry and/or Unaltered/Natural Landscapes	112
DC1101	IMPORTANT: Unrestricted/Spontaneous Access/Recreation	83
DC1107	IMPORTANT: Other	18
DC1105	IMPORTANT: Equestrian Trails/Activities	8
DC1106	IMPORTANT: Accessibility for Limited Mobility Individuals	8
	What kind of experiences do you want future visitors/generations to have when they come to Rocky Mountain National Park?	
DC1302	FUTURE: Wilderness/Backcountry and/or Unaltered/Natural Landscapes	49
DC1305	FUTURE: No Crowding/Traffic	29
DC1303	FUTURE: Dispersed Recreation (climbing, hiking, backpacking, skiing, etc.)	28
DC1301	FUTURE: Unrestricted/Spontaneous Access/Recreation	24
DC1304	FUTURE: Multi-Generational/Family-Friendly Park Experiences (all ability levels)	8
	What issues most interfere with your desired park experience?	
DC1202	INTERFERE: Crowds/Traffic Congestion/Full Parking Lots	263
DC1201	INTERFERE: Timed Entry/Reservations	255
DC1203	INTERFERE: Human Behavior (irresponsible/inconsiderate, human waste, user-made trails, etc.)	124
DC1208	INTERFERE: Other	31
DC1204	INTERFERE: Noise	24
DC1205	INTERFERE: Inadequate/Poorly Maintained Facilities (trails, restrooms, etc.)	18
DC1206	INTERFERE: Inadequate Points of Entry/Access	15
DC1207	INTERFERE: Difficult/No Accessibility for Limited Mobility Individuals or More Needed	8

Table 1. Code Categories and Comment Total per Code

Code	Code Category Description	Total
	How can the park better protect resources for future generations? What strategies would you like the planning team to consider when brainstorming visitor use management?	
MS1300	STRATEGY: Pilot Timed-Entry Permit System (Advanced Reservations) or other means of limiting visitors	303
MS2000	STRATEGY: Education of Visitors	214
MS2100	STRATEGY: Other Suggestion(s) for Long Range Management	184
MS1700	STRATEGY: Shuttle System	139
MS1900	STRATEGY: Enforcement of Existing Regulations	135
MS1500	STRATEGY: Infrastructure Improvements (parking, toilets, roads, etc.)	107
MS2200	STRATEGY: More Staff and/or Volunteer Rangers or Volunteer Opportunities	67
MS1600	STRATEGY: Parking-related options (metering, webcams, real-time messaging, intelligent transportation systems)	47
MS1800	STRATEGY: Area-Specific Strategies	44
MS2300	STRATEGY: Increased Fees	43
MS2400	STRATEGY: Park/Area Closures (to hiking, camping, etc.)	37
MS1400	STRATEGY: Temporary Vehicle Restrictions	7
	What is the park doing well to manage these issues that you would like to see continue?	
MS1201	DOING WELL: Timed Entry/Reservations	224
MS1204	DOING WELL: Other	101
MS1203	DOING WELL: Park Staff/Volunteers	70
MS1202	DOING WELL: Shuttle Service	69
	Other Comments or Issues?	
IS1500	ISSUES: Access (Comments on Locals' Access, East Side vs. West Side)	155
IS1600	ISSUES: Exclusion (aging visitors, visitors without technology, ethics of access to parks, etc.)	88
IS1200	ISSUES: Visitor Experience (traffic and parking congestion, human waste, delays at entrance stations and shuttle stops, difficulty accessing preferred destinations, impacts on recreation (other than Wilderness))	68
IS1300	ISSUES: Safety (hostile interactions between visitors or between visitors and staff as frustration levels increase, wildlife encounters, illegal campfires)	19
IS1102	ISSUES: Wildlife	15
IS1400	ISSUES: Facilities (wear and tear, clean restrooms, water use, wastewater management)	10
IS1101	ISSUES: Air Quality or Other Pollution	9

Code	Code Category Description	Total
IS1103	ISSUES: Wilderness/Backcountry	7
IS1700	ISSUES: Climate Change	6
IS1900	ISSUES: Cultural/Historic Resources	1
SE1100	Comment on Fees, Annual Passes, or Park Budget	69
PR1100	Comment about Process (Public Participation, NEPA, Planning, etc.)	36
VU2000	Comment on Park Capacity/Carrying Capacity	28
PN1000	Comment on Purpose and Need of Long-Range Day Use Visitor Access Strategy	19
VU1000	Comment on Interagency Visitor Use Management Framework (including past research, visitor use plans and processes in other national parks)	3
ZN1000	Comment on Zone Boundaries	3
DU1000	Duplicate Correspondence	7
	Total Coded Comments	3,853

Concern Statements

Concern statements were developed for each category of response to summarize the nature and content of public comments. Concern statements are listed below and organized according to the coding categories and NPS question prompts.

What experiences in Rocky Mountain National Park do you find most important?

DC1101 - IMPORTANT: Unrestricted/Spontaneous Access/Recreation

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64363) To some commentors, opportunities for spontaneous recreation (hiking, climbing, snowshoeing, picnicking, driving tours, etc.) in the park without having to plan ahead or pay for a reservation and with the ability to adapt to changing weather conditions are the most important.

DC1102 - IMPORTANT: Dispersed Recreation (climbing, hiking, backpacking, skiing, etc.)

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64365) To some commentors, dispersed and/or backcountry/wilderness recreation experiences (backpacking/hiking, rock/ice climbing, skiing, snowshoeing, fishing, etc.) are the most important.

DC1103 - IMPORTANT: Wilderness/Backcountry and/or Unaltered/Natural landscapes

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64373) To some commentors, opportunities to experience a pristine and wild landscape, wildlife in their unaltered landscapes, and natural ecological processes are most important.

DC1104 - IMPORTANT: Day Use Activities (site seeing, wildlife viewing, driving tours, picnicking, etc.)

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64368) To some commentors, day-use and/or front-country activities (site seeing, wildlife viewing, driving tours, picnicking, etc.) are most important.

DC1105 - IMPORTANT: Equestrian Trails/Activities

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64369) To some commentors, horseback riding in the park, especially in backcountry and/or wilderness areas, is most important.

DC1106 - IMPORTANT: Accessibility for Limited Mobility Individuals

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64374) To some commentors, opportunities for limited mobility individuals to enjoy the park, whether on a trail or in a vehicle, are most important.

DC1107 - IMPORTANT: Other

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64375) Some commentors identified a number of other park experiences that are most important to them, including park programs, positive visitor experiences, and maintained park facilities.

What kind of experiences do you want future visitors/generations to have when they come to Rocky Mountain National Park?

DC1301 - FUTURE: Unrestricted/Spontaneous Access/Recreation

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64398) Some commentors desire opportunities for spontaneous and unrestricted access for future park users.

DC1302 - FUTURE: Wilderness/Backcountry and/or Unaltered/Natural Landscapes

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64399) Some commentors desire future park visitors to experience wild, natural, and pristine landscapes.

DC1303 - FUTURE: Dispersed Recreation (climbing, hiking, backpacking, skiing, etc.)

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64400) Some commentors desire opportunities for dispersed recreation for future park users.

DC1304 - FUTURE: Multi-Generational/Family-Friendly Park Experiences (all ability levels)

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64402) Some commentors desire future park users to be able to have multi-generational family experiences in the park.

DC1305 - FUTURE: No Crowding/Traffic

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64403) Some commentors desire uncrowded and traffic-free experiences for future park users.

What issues most interfere with your desired park experience?

DC1201 - INTERFERE: Timed Entry/Reservations

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64385) The timed-entry reservation system and/or the technology used to implement it interfere with some commentors' desired park experience by making it "difficult or impossible" to obtain entry, by limiting visitors' flexibility to postpone or change a planned trip due to inclement weather or health, and by making it difficult for touring motorists to simply drive through the park.

DC1202 - INTERFERE: Crowds/Traffic Congestion/Full Parking Lots

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64386) Crowds of people, traffic congestion, and lack of parking within the park, particularly in popular areas or trailheads and on holiday weekends, interfere most with some commentors' desired park experience.

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64387) Long lines and traffic congestion at park gates as visitors wait to come into the park or to get information from park personnel interferes with some commentors' desired park experience.

DC1203 - INTERFERE: Human Behavior (irresponsible/inconsiderate, human waste, visitor-created trails, etc.)

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64389) Inappropriate human behavior, such as harassment of wildlife; creation and use of social trails; litter and human waste; inconsiderate, destructive, or unsafe behavior; and lack of preparedness for weather or trail conditions, interferes with some commentors' desired park experience.

DC1204 - INTERFERE: Noise

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64390) Human-created noise most interferes with some commentors' desired park experience.

DC1205 - INTERFERE: Inadequate/Poorly Maintained Facilities (trails, restrooms, etc.)

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64391) Inadequate (for the number of people) or poorly maintained facilities (e.g., trails, restrooms, and horse trailer parking) interfere with some commentors' desired park experience.

DC1206 - INTERFERE: Inadequate Points of Entry/Access

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64392) Some commentors stated that inadequate points of entry or access interfere with the park experience of visitors seeking to reach more secluded parts of the park, because they still must use the same entry points, trailheads, or parking areas as the most popular visitor areas.

DC1207 - INTERFERE: Difficult/No Accessibility for Limited Mobility Individuals or More Needed

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64395) Some commentors stated that limited access for individuals with limited mobility interferes with the desired park experience of some visitors.

DC1208 - INTERFERE: Other

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64396) Some commentors identified a variety of other issues that interfere with their desired park experiences, including road and trail closures, construction, and weather.

How can the park better protect resources for future generations? What strategies would you like the planning team to consider when brainstorming visitor use management?

MS1300 - STRATEGY: Timed-Entry Permit System (advanced reservations) or other means of limiting visitors

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62080) Some commentors believe that a timed entry/reservation system could be an effective permanent strategy. They have suggestions for improving its implementation, including different permits for different Management Zones (backcountry vs. popular driving areas); improvements to the online reservation/permit platform; different reservation limits; and exceptions for climbers, tour companies with international clients, locals, or those with inholdings.

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62086) Some commentors would prefer other systems for limiting visitors over a timed-entry system. Examples include punch cards for seniors and/or locals, trailhead-specific reservations, a lottery system, limiting group size (i.e. tour groups, scout/church/camp groups, etc.), or simply a cap on the numbers of visitors or vehicles coupled with "first come, first serve" or "one in, one out."

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62090) Some commentors stated that the timed entry/reservation system needs to be modified to distinguish between those who drive through the park and those who stop to use park facilities or participate in recreation activities. They state the two groups use the park differently.

MS1400 - STRATEGY: Temporary Vehicle Restrictions

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64443) Some commentors suggested limits on vehicle numbers or the times of day that vehicles are allowed into the park.

MS1500 - STRATEGY: Infrastructure Improvements (parking, toilets, roads, etc.)

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62104) Some commentors want an increase in parking infrastructure, such as new/additional parking lots inside the park at popular areas and trailheads or additional park-and-ride lots outside the park, as well as reserved parking areas for specific uses, such as backcountry camping or horse trailers.

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62106) Some commentors want the park to develop additional trails and trailheads, particularly in underutilized portions of the park but also in popular areas that are easy for mobility-limited visitors to access.

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64448) Some commentors want the park to construct additional campgrounds, install additional toilet facilities at popular trailheads,

increase the number of trash cans, and generally improve the visitor support infrastructure throughout the park.

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64449) To disperse visitors and to handle the increased number of visitors, some commentors want the park to construct additional entrance gate(s) and road(s) and improve existing roads throughout the park.

MS1600 - STRATEGY: Parking-related Options (metering, webcams, real-time messaging, intelligent transportation systems)

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62110) Some commentors want the park to implement parking-related strategies, including the use of technology. Some commentors provided specific suggestions, such as strategic staffing, timed parking, and express lanes.

MS1700 - STRATEGY: Shuttle System

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62112) Some commentors want the shuttle system to be improved/expanded. Some commentors provided specific suggestions, including additional routes, more buses, separate entrances for shuttles and tour buses, and switching to electric buses.

MS1800 - STRATEGY: Area-specific Strategies

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62113) Some commentors want use area-specific and/or zone-specific visitor management strategies, including permits or lotteries for certain trails or areas and limiting use of some advanced trails to experienced individuals.

MS1900 - STRATEGY: Enforcement of Existing Regulations

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62114) Some commentors want additional ranger presence in high-use areas, and better enforcement of existing rules, including using fines and/or removal from the park.

MS2000 - STRATEGY: Education of Visitors

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62116) Some commentors want additional or improved visitor education about acceptable park behavior and recreation opportunities in the park. Some provided specific suggestions for improving visitor education (i.e., require training for certain trails or recreation types, assign rangers to specific high-use trails, include education/training as part of the reservation system).

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64461) Some commentors want the park to better communicate with and educate visitors regarding the timed-entry reservation process; particularly how to make online reservations.

MS2100 - STRATEGY: Other Suggestion(s) for Long-Range Management

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62117) Some commentors provided numerous specific suggestions for other long range visitor management strategies, including joint planning with Estes Park and other neighboring communities; working with tour

operators and other businesses; limiting tour buses, large groups, and non-citizens; stopping or limiting media ads promoting the park; and turning certain roads into pedestrian- or cycle-only routes.

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID 64463) Some commentors made suggestions for long-range park management that were beyond the scope of visitor access, including fire and forest management and wildlife management.

MS2200 - STRATEGY: More Staff and/or Volunteer Rangers/Other Volunteer Positions/Opportunities

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64465) Some commentors want the park to hire more park staff/rangers and/or better utilize volunteers, including creating additional volunteer incentives and opportunities.

MS2300 - STRATEGY: Increased Fees

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64466) Some commentors want the park to consider raising fees at the park, including entry fees, parking and shuttle fees, and other creative pricing to control crowds and raise revenue to alleviate park infrastructure and staffing issues.

MS2400 - STRATEGY: Park/Area Closures (to hiking, camping, etc.)

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64468) Some commentors want the park to utilize closure options (area, trail, and park-wide closures) to alleviate strain on the park and its resources.

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64469) Some commentors want the park to reconsider some of its seasonal closures, and if the park continues to use trail and area closures, they should try to use them sparingly while informing the public early to limit impacts to visitors.

What is the park doing well to manage these issues that you would like to see continue?

MS1201 - DOING WELL: Timed Entry/Reservations

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64431) Some commentors think that the pilot timed-entry permit system (advanced reservations) is working well and should be continued. Specifically, park users like that 1) some entry passes are available ahead of time and that some passes are released the day before; and 2) reservations are not required for park entrance at certain times of the day (early morning and late in the afternoon).

MS1202 - DOING WELL: Shuttle Service

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64433) Some commentors think that the shuttle service works well and should be continued and/or expanded.

MS1203 - DOING WELL: Park Staff/Volunteers

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64435) Some commentors think that park rangers and volunteers do an excellent job welcoming visitors to the park, answering questions, resolving problems, and educating visitors.

MS1204 - DOING WELL: Other

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64436) Some commentors identified a variety of other things the park is doing well that should be continued, including education and outreach (e.g., ranger talks, junior ranger programs, seeking public input, etc.), road and trails maintenance, webcams and signage, and park resource management (elk, vegetation, etc.).

Other Comments or Issues?

IS1101 - ISSUES: Air Quality or Other Pollution

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64404) Some commentors are concerned about air quality and other pollution impacts of vehicle traffic to the park and its resources.

IS1102 - ISSUES: Wildlife

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64406) Some commentors would like to see wildlife and their habitats protected within the park and prioritized by park managers.

IS1103 - ISSUES: Wilderness/Backcountry

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64411) Some commentors want the park to consider and give equal weight to the part of the mission which calls for protection and preservation of park resources (i.e., wilderness) along with weighing the quality of the visitor experience.

IS1200 - ISSUES: Visitor Experience (traffic and parking congestion, human waste, delays at entrance stations and shuttle stops, difficulty accessing preferred destinations, impacts on recreation (other than wilderness))

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62063) Some commentors want the park to focus on improving/preserving the visitor experience over allowing more people to visit the park.

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62068) Some commentors believe that the visitor experience is generally positive at the park and that negative aspects are confined to certain high-use areas or during peak visitor days/hours.

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64409) Some commentors are disheartened by deteriorating conditions and diminished visitor experiences due to increased visitors.

IS1300 - ISSUES: Safety (hostile interactions between visitors or between visitors and staff as frustration levels increase, wildlife encounters, illegal campfires)

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62072) Some commentors state that permits/reservations limit spontaneity and create situations where people may recreate in dangerous conditions (e.g., thunderstorms).

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64413) Some commentors want park managers to consider potential safety issues in its planning process, including wildfire evacuation procedures, bicycles on roadways, and dangerous road conditions.

IS1400 - ISSUES: Facilities (wear and tear, clean restrooms, water use, wastewater management)

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64420) Some commentors are concerned about the impact of significantly increased visitation on park infrastructure.

IS1500 - ISSUES: Access (Comments on Locals' Access, East Side vs. West Side)

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62135) Some commentors expressed concern that a "one-size-fits all" timed entry/reservation system disproportionately impacts "local" residents who are more likely to care for the park and who likely use the park daily or weekly rather than as part of a planned vacation. Definitions of "local" ranged from residents of Estes Park, to residents of Denver and its suburbs, to residents of Colorado. Some suggested solutions, including a local and/or volunteer access pass, a "locals only" entrance lane, and/or specific hours or days available to locals for entry without reservation.

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62137) Some commentors suggested that there should be accommodations or a local "through pass" for park users who are driving through the park versus those who stop and spend time in the park.

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62138) Some commentors think that access and use of the west side of the park is very different from the heavily-visited east side, and suggest there should be different access management scenarios for each side of the park.

IS1600 - ISSUES: Exclusion (aging visitors, visitors without technology, ethics of access to parks, etc.)

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62143) Some commentors think that an online timed-entry/reservation system discriminates against certain sets of park users (i.e., aging visitors, the economically disadvantaged, and visitors without technology, etc.). Some provided suggestions for mitigating this concern.

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64548) Some commentors think that the NPS needs to better understand the historical context of its foundation, address systemic discrimination that may be present in current management strategies, and be careful to not pursue strategies that may exclude people who have different ideologies, who look different, or who come from different geographic areas.

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62148) Some commentors think that visitor management strategies, such as an application or real-time traffic/parking text updates, discriminate against park users who do not have a smart phone. There are also many areas of the park where cellular service is unavailable.

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62151) Some commentors think that regulating entrance to a taxpayer funded park is un-democratic and un-American.

IS1700 - ISSUES: Climate Change

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 64430) Some commentors think that the impacts of global climate change need to be considered by park managers as they develop the day use visitor access strategy.

PN1000 - Comment on Purpose and Need of Long-Range Day Use Visitor Access Strategy

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62118) Some commentors think that the Purpose and Need for the Long-Range Day Use Visitor Access Strategy is vague and written in such a way that suggests a certain outcome.

PR1100 - Comment about Process (public participation, NEPA, planning, etc.)

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62119) Some commentors found the public engagement webinar informative and appreciated the opportunity to provide input in the planning process.

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62120) Some commentors did not like the webinar and/or expressed dissatisfaction with the public participation process.

SE1100 - Comment on Fees, Annual Passes, or Park Budget

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62123) Some commentors think that the reservation fee should be waived if a visitor already has an annual park pass or senior pass.

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62124) Some commentors think that the park budget needs to be increased to pay for ongoing park protection, maintenance, and operation responsibilities as well as new strategies (technology, enforcement of regulations, reservation systems, etc.) are needed to alleviate visitor use issues.

VU2000 - Comment on Park Capacity/Carrying Capacity

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62167) Some commentors think that the park has a limited capacity; either the limits need to guide entrance numbers or infrastructure needs to be improved to increase capacity.

ZN1000 - Comment on Management Zone Boundaries

CONCERN STATEMENT: (Concern ID: 62174) Some commentors think that modifications are needed to the proposed management zones.